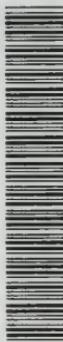


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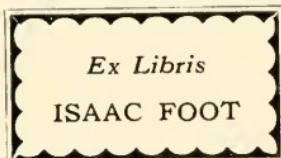
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VOICES
—
OF
WOMANHOOD

BY
ETHEL CARNIE

*Author of "Songs of a Factory Girl" "Miss Nobody"
"The Lamp Girl" &c.*

LONDON
HEADLEY BROTHERS
BISHOPSGATE

To

MR. W. H. BURNETT,

EDITOR OF LATE "BLACKBURN STANDARD AND EXPRESS," AND
ONE TIME PRESIDENT OF BLACKBURN AUTHORS' ASSOCIATION,

I DEDICATE THIS BOOK, AS A SMALL TOKEN OF
AFFECTION AND ESTEEM, AND GRATEFUL
REMEMBRANCE OF HIS BEING MY FIRST
LITERARY FRIEND, AND FOR HIS
FIRST INTRODUCING ME TO
THE READING PUBLIC.

APRIL, 1914.

For permission to reprint "A Fireside
Fancy" and "The Second Mother"
I am indebted to the kindness of
Messrs. Partridge, and the Editor
of the "Children's Friend" and
"Family Friend."

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PRELUDE

VOICES impetuous, daring, and wild ;
Voices of agony, moaning, and fear ;
Voices of yearning, with sorrowful sigh,
These through the silence I listen, and hear.
Whispers that faint in the great world of sound,
Echoes that linger a moment—to die !
Murmurs of tenderness over the cot,
Murmurs of weariness for the wide sky.
Out of the mystical silence they float,
Voices of rebel, or motherhood mild ;
Love to you, gentle ones, crowned with white peace.
Voices impetuous, daring and wild,
What shall we give to ye, blazing new trails ?
Prison, and scorning, loud laughter and jeers,
These give they all those who seek for new lands !
What shall a poet give ? Shall it be tears ?
I, as you pass, unashamed, unafraid,
Out from the silence to cry against wrong
Wave Song's bright banner, and smile that the
world
Yet has its heroes so splendidly strong.

VOICES OF WOMANHOOD

LIFE.

LET me know all, Life, all !
The pain, the gloom, the strife,
The height, the depth, the fall—
I only ask for Life.

Give me no sheltering wings
To shield me from distress,
Of great and tiny things,
Life ! Life ! I ask no less.

For when it all is done,
All suffered and all known,
Lightning and rain and sun—
There's time to be a stone.

A stone to lie quite still,
Without a single care,
Without a need to fill,
Without a joy to share !

Save me from those who shield
From danger and from doom.
Give me the open field,
No risk is but—a tomb.

A REBEL SONG.

BE not afraid, whate'er they say,
 Tyrant and priest, and threatening gun !
 Thy father for one inch of way
 Died—with his face towards the sun.

Fear not their chains, my little child,
 None are so vile and strong as fear ;
 Hope guards the imprisoned eagle wild,
 Truth's voice from living tombs speaks clear.

The vultures on the lion feed !
 But let this be thine inmost stay :
 There's heaven in hell for those who bleed
 To win an inch of Freedom's way.

WHY ?

THE man is free to come and free to go,
 To earn his crust, and bed, and journey on,
 And hush the restless cry that's in his blood,
 But I must hear it plead till life is done.

He sleeps in forest leaves so fresh and brown,
 He drinks from the cold spring that tastes of
 earth,
 And looks in eyes of men with hearts akin—
 But I must stay pot-bound in place of birth.

My limbs are strong to toil from morn to night,
Or waste in dungeons dark for Freedom's sake,
And throats as soft and white the rope has stung,
And hearts as womanly the fool may break.

I'm strong for labour, pain, and heat of day,
My little hands may fight the vile disease ;
And through the darkened vale I bring back life,
And choose the hardship rather than the ease.

The heart that's bold within the narrow room
Is fit for outside chance and mountain climb,
And open doors that lead us God knows where—
And will not shut until the end of Time.

A WISH.

WHEN I must pass from out this mortal life,
Lay down for evermore its joy and strife,
O, may the one who lifts my sinking head
Be not such as sees goodness in the dead,
And stabs the living like a poisoned knife ;

Nor one to weep and pray, and paint for me
The glory of the life that is to be ;
But rather one to speak of joys gone by,
Till sleep comes softly down upon mine eye,
And sense is lost in Time's infinity.

No solemn, dark-cowled priest drone at mine ear,
But someone that I love in accents clear
 Sing an old song we learnt when gay and young,
 When o'er our heads the bursting blossoms hung,
And I shall pass away without a fear.

Nor let the dismal shadows of the tomb
Like a black raven's wing make dark each room.
 Through unveiled windows let the glorious light
 Stream in unchecked. I ever held it right
To give this o'er-sad world no tithe of gloom.

AUTUMN.

WHEN autumn days are come at last,
 And lengthening shades are closing fast,
When wild wet winds sigh out their grief,
And all the woods are red of leaf,
May all my toil in sun and rain
Yield me, before I turn again,
One tranquil hour of rest before
I, silent, pass and close the door.

I would not pass in act of toil,
But sheathe my spade within the soil,
And look around on field and sky
As one who stays to say good-bye,
And see the folk who ploughed with me,
And guess at furrows yet to be,

And know, though fields are grey with cloud,
That Spring will come with sun-shafts proud.

I would not hurry swift away
As careless, thoughtless hirelings may,
But, dignified, would rest before
I, silent, pass and close the door.

A VISION.*

THERE is a silent woman in this land—
A silent woman, thinking all this while
Beside a fire upon a little hearth
As narrow as a cradle—or a grave !
Strange echoes reach her from the world outside,
And move, and thrill her ; but she sits and waits
And muses in her corner 'midst the shades.
She listens to the voices from her hearth,
And answers not again nor contradicts.
Though sometimes in her eyes a smile will gleam,
A shadow sometimes rest upon her brow.
And all this while she never speaks a word
Save gentle love. And by her house there sound
A thousand echoes from the world outside.
When she shall speak, ah, then the world will
hear,
Will listen as she listened all this while,
For as her strength was in the little house
So strong will be her presence in the world.

* By kind permission of *The Daily Herald*.

THE CRADLE.

THIS cradle was an acorn once;
The great winds rocked it with a song
Through sunny noons and starry nights,
And bade it grow both fair and strong.
“Oh, lullaby!” the blithe winds said
Until, quite brown and ripe, ‘twas shed.

Then in the dewy dark it lay
And missed the rocking of the wind,
And felt the fire-like shoots of life,
And struggled through Pain’s pathways
blind,
Until a little leaf flashed green
And knew the sun yet cheered the scene.

Mighty and strong it grew, until,
A well-ringed tree, ‘twas felled at last.
It tottered groaning to the earth
With thought that life was surely past—
To cradle thee, my dear delight,
Through sunny morn and starry night.

Child, grow thou as the acorn grew,
The world is fair, say what we will,—
Growth in the darkness when we fall,
And daring hearts may top the hill.
Oh, lullaby, sing lullaby,
The fruitful earth looks to the sky.

THE NEW COMMANDMENT.

THOU shalt not steal; nor shall one steal from thee
Thy right to live beneath a summer sky,
To toil or play in happy liberty,
And, when thy day is done, tranquil to die.
Respect thy brother's right, nor let thine own
Be filched from thee—that vital, simple right
To roses, bread, and life's full undertone,
And all the swift, high notes of sweet delight.
However honoured, ermined be the thief,
Let him not slip away to boast the deed;
It will not boot to mourn in helpless grief,
Or wring thine hands and say thy heart doth bleed.
Upon him, like the lightning, radiant, strong!
Or on thy soul shall lie one half the blame,
And cowardice, with all his trembling throng,
Shall make thy children's children curse thy name.

THE LOST COMRADE.

THE toiling man who, by a whim of chance,
Or little gift the gods gave at his birth,
Some power discovered in his own strange breast
Whilst others gazed—unconscious of their worth;

The man who climbed, forgetful of the time
He shared our sweat, our bread, our grinding care,
And sometimes cursed with us beneath his breath,—
When he falls, then,— ah, what a fall is there !
Of all the lost most sadly, utterly,
Most deeply, darkly, damnably shut out ;
The greatest leader stood a world apart,
We sometimes watched with smiling eyes of
doubt.
But he, our very own—oh, grief, oh, shame !—
When he destroys himself in us, at death
He lies without a people and a place,
Unclassed, despised and mourned by no true
breath,
Whilst outcasts of the world yet boast a race,
Possessing nothing but our heart's warm place.

HIS BOOKS.

HE loved his books. They stood there row on row,
Red, green, and blue, and some in twilight-grey,
And some, with gilding. I walked soft and slow.
I think he sat and read them night and day.
He slept the fewest hours—and how he bent !
A tradesman's knocking made him stir and curse,
Because, at such a sound, some great thought went.
He bent above his book as a tired nurse

Bends, crooning, tender, over a sick child.

It was the greatest task to mend his coat !

I've seen him pass into the night so wild

Without an umbrella—wrapped in thought ;
Whilst I feared for his chest, yet dared not
speak,

For talking-folk he hated, and I fear

He would have said a servant should be meek

And cold—who got her twenty pounds a year.

His window looked upon a quiet square

With great trees always swaying up and down
As if they thought him foolish sitting there,

And asked him to come out and see the town.

Mine was a little attic, right away,

And all my work was o'er by candle-light,

And there I used to sit, and sew and pray.

Before I went to bed, yes, every night,

I crept down all those stairs—aye, seventy-four,

Soft, with the candle shaded by my hand,

To see that bar of light beneath his door,

And say good-night to it. That light was
grand,—

That little lonely bar of heavenly gold

Escaping from the grip of the grim dark,—

And what it meant to me I scarce have told.

'Twas like an angel light that shone to mark

Division from his work and that of mine ;

I never saw it but my eyes held tears,

And yet I think my sorrow was divine—

I served him well and faithful twenty years,

And he—he never guessed that with his bread
I mixed in love and sorrow, and my fear
That he'd leave off his coat—and soon be dead.

He never knew how much I loved his sneer,
That fine, fine sneer when visitors would call

And try to draw him from his peaceful den,
(And I went down and lied there in the hall)

To waste and war and muddle up with men.
Once, only once, he seemed to note that I

Was a fair woman, for he turned his head
A moment from his book and looked full sly,

And said a day would come when I should
wed ;

But as for him, he hoped it would be late,

For I was a good servant, quiet, staid,
And understood him and his quiet fate,

And of his sombreness was ne'er afraid.

One night he came in with some purchased books

And called me from the attic to his room,
And fear rushed on my spirit with his looks—

A dampness and a terror like the tomb.

I called help in, and put him snug to bed,

And fought with death for him, but all in vain,
For he was dying then, the doctor said,

And all that night there fell a sighing rain.
Between his torpor he was talking soft

Of new books that he'd bought and what they
held,

And of his old ones, often, aye, so oft ;

My heart with very agony was felled.

And I—I dared not kiss him—lest he know,
For he, he paid me twenty pounds a year
To clean, and cook, and speak in accents low,
He never asked me for a loving tear.

And then the nurse came and she looked on me
As if I nothing knew—and closed the door,
But I was always listening tenderly
Until I knew that everything was o'er.

And then I got my chance. The nurse was out,
The little room was quiet, where he lay,
And I was unafraid, and had no doubt
Or dread of death to fill me with dismay.

So I pushed back the door and kissed his brow,
And told him that I loved him—loved his looks,
However cold or terrible—just how
I even loved him as he loved his books.

That was my chance. When dusting strangers' rooms
And listening to their orders high and shrill,
Upon my world of grey a bright joy blooms—
I took my chance and kissed him, calm and still.

And in my one lone room I have his books,
Bought with the hundred pounds he left to me,
And so can conjure up the master's looks,
The lonely square, the midnight lamp, the tea
I often took him, which he rarely drank.

I cannot read his books—they're mostly dry,
And leave my head a little aching blank.
I'll love his books and him until I die.
And so he got my service, love and tear,
And got it all for twenty pounds a year !

LA FEMME.

3 AM weak—they have sung it in song,
For my eyes are soon melted to tears;
But the lords of the earth they are strong,
So the annals have told us for years.
They are strong—yet my tears as they fall
Win a way through their hearts hard as mail.
And my smile that swims through like a sun
Shakes the soul that red war made not quail.

I am weak—they have measured my might
By the force of my little, white hand;
But they fought, and they bled, and they died,
When my lips breathed the word of command!
Heroes—gods—fell at Troy for my sake,
Mauled to death by the blood-hounds of War,
Whilst I laughed with my Paris far off—
And my beauty a bright, evil star!

They have conquered the hosts of the sea,
But I came, and my Nelson fell down.
They have smiled at the snarl of the wolf,
But turned pale with alarm at my frown!
Great Antonius, thirsty for power,
Lost the world at the glance of my eye,
All the purple and pomp of its show
As a poor, worthless clout casting by.

And the martyrs, and lovers, and kings
I have cradled and hushed at my breast!
I have rocked the Immortals to sleep
With an old simple rune full of rest;
And the warriors who hurled the bright spears
On a day with my milk were content—
Alexanders who wept for two worlds,
For a while in my lap happy went.

I am weak—I have bent my fair neck
Where the guillotine throws its black shade,
And have walked with a proud, queenly tread,
Dying well on the doom I have made!
I have roamed lonely fields of the slain,
Lamp in hand, for the lover I loved—
An Evangeline, faithful to death,
Through the dead and the dying slow moved.

In my face are the lily and rose,
In my eyes tints of sunlight and sea,
Whilst my voice weds all sweet notes in one;
Yet an end unto beauty must be!
For the white winter snaps down the flower,
And the sunlight is swallowed in gloom,
And the voice like a bell's golden chime
Cannot sound through the dust of the tomb.

Yet I walk forth again and again,
Along highway, and byeway, and glen,
And my soul is the same evermore
As it bursts on the rapt sight of men.

Till the last man has sung into sleep,
 All the stars fallen red from the sky,
 With the last woman dead at his side
 Shall the spell I have thrown fit not by.

SONG OF THE PHARISEES.

DESPISE them that they could not tell
 The sweet from bitter, false from true,
 Or knowing, all too weakly fell,
 Cast heaven away, preferring hell,
 Not wise as I and you.

Who fluttered, fell into the flame
 That threw for us no golden lure,
 Too well we recognised its shame,
 And back with wings scarce heated came,
 Because we feared the more.

Who know not love, but only lust,
 The burning thorn without the rose ;
 Earth's beauty just a stretch of dust,
 Whereon they scramble for a crust ;
 The sky a thing that snows.

So wise and good, with eyesight clear,
 We sit serene in Paradise,
 And pat ourselves that we are here,
 With many a righteous sigh (or sneer)
 For those not half so wise.

COWARD OR FOOL.

I'D rather be the noble fool
Who strives to win the upward track,
And dies for naught through too much haste,
Than jolt the wheels of Progress back.

My bones, picked clean by vulture hordes,
Whitening beneath the free sky's blue,
Should cry to every nearing foot,
" Fear not. This is the worst they do ! "

No room for cowards ! but the fool
Who fails from nobleness sublime
Shall share the wreath with those more wise,
Who on her failures stand, and climb.

IN STORMY DAYS.

THREE is a deep and sacred joy in living,
Not only through the calm and sunny days,
But when the heart in trembling drops is giving
Red blood-dew, as great Sorrow's pallid haze
Lies thick athwart the sighing shores of life,
And we reel back, half-fainting in the strife,

Half-beaten, till Hope comes with balm-tipped
fingers,

To send us nerved again unto the fray ;
With souls in which her lightest whisper lingers,
To rise once more unawed. Not just when May
Unfolds her snow-white banners to warm air
We say unto ourselves that life is fair.

Tho' blustering winds sink 'neath Despair's black
ocean

Our fragile dreams, with roses round each prow,
Dreams rising 'bove the heart's sad, wild emotion,

Above the agony of the mad blow—
When tides recede we search along the shore,
Building from wrecks more nobly than before.

When through the woods we roam where, lately
cooing,

Soft doves were nesting in the branches green,
And silence echoes now the wild wind's soughing,
We feel that, locked within the mournful scene,

Are the sweet vi'lets, that, laughing, bring
Fragrance and beauty with the birth of Spring.

A little space, defeat and dearth may crush us,
But, buoyant, riding o'er a flood of tears,
The heart soars up ; hopes once again flush o'er
us ;

And, gazing with clear eyes o'er all the years,
We see that storms bring strength, and through
the veins
Exquisite rapture triumphs o'er our pains.

The feet, unmoulded, that must march behind us
We feel will stumble less than we have trod
The thorns before them ; and the chains that
bind us

Do hang less heavily in that the sod
Has drunk our blood in weary marching hours,
For richly 'neath *their* feet shall spring the flowers.

HER SUNDAY OUT.

DEAR me, but what a week it's been !
Duster and clout from day to day,
And calm commands and gentle hints,
And never once a word to say.

But as I've passed the big hall clock
 With white moon-face and waggish tick,
 I'm almost sure I saw him wink
 To hear me say, "I'm sick, sick, sick!"

Sometimes I've nigh forgot that I
 Am flesh and blood. Oh what a night!
 I'll wear the hat with lilac flowers,
 And my new gloves, so sweet and bright.
 I wonder if he's waiting now!
 It's precious fine to have a beau,
 To hear your skirts swish over grass,
 And know that someone waits for you.

It makes you think you are someone—
 In spite of eating scrappy grub
 Alone, as some offensive thing,
 Then bending down to rub and scrub—
 To smell the wild flowers in the hedge
 And walk through wet and tangled green,
 With someone helping you along
 Might make you fancy you're a queen.

The self that dares not speak or laugh
 Shall live to-night. O scented dew!
 In yonder wood the cuckoo calls,
 And glad am I his notes are few.*

* Referring to the North Country superstition that as many years must pass as the cuckoo's calls before the hearer is married.

And now I hear a sweeter sound,
A well known whistle, loud and clear !
If every night were Sunday night
Monday would have no cast of fear.

EPITAPH ON A TOILER'S CHILD.

SLEEP, pretty one, who hast not known
The care that's heavier than a stone,
The heated rush from morn to night
Till life grows barren of delight,
The stunted soul, the wearied limb
And bright blue eyes too early dim,
The dreams too early thrust aside
To swell the merchant's worldly pride.
Thou hast not known the endless day
When every hour is wished away,
And toil and sickness, wrestling, stand—
The aching heart, the trembling hand,
That still must ply the wearying thread
To earn its dole of daily bread.
Thou hast not, quivering, felt the life
Of mother, sister, child or wife
Dependent on thy body's health,
The power that heaps thy master's wealth !
Death with a few short pangs gave rest,
He snatched thee from thy mother's breast,

And chained thee in his fetters cold,
A tyrant merciless and bold;
Yet he was generous in his power,
The agony was but an hour,
And when 'twas o'er no meaner might
Could bring a pang or mar delight.

SHAME.

YOU can forgive a man a thousand things,
The sharp word, and the scornful tyrant-
glance,
The hot impatience; and your heart may heal
Again with one kind word, tossed down by chance—
And one light kiss can make it bloom with
youth.

You can forgive indifference, cold neglect
That left you lone and weary, waiting hours,
Keen wrongs that you did nothing to expect,
And even blows and curses when they leave
No outward marks for all the world to read—
But when he strikes the face he once vowed fair,
Love breaks within the heart, and both do bleed.
Springs bitter Hate, twin-born with burning Shame,
Brings Grief too deep to make the eyelids wet,
As the cold world stares where the kiss once
touched
The blushing cheek; and you can ne'er forget,

No, not though sweetest years flow calmly on,
And fair Atonement wanders o'er the scene,
The heart will break with sorrow for days
past—
All things are changed from what they once have
been.

A WASHERWOMAN.

3 DO not care ! There was a time
When I put on my Sunday clothes
And went a-walking in the sun,
Like all these folk who tilt their nose
To see me now. What do I care ?
My elbows and my heart are bare !

What does it matter, anyway ?
What does it matter at the end
If you've climbed up and up and up,
Or have not got one bloomin' friend ?
Die with a little prayer of trust
Or with a curse ? Both turn to dust.

Why should I be afraid to die ?
I wash and wash the whole year long
The clothes of those who scorn me so,
And fill my nights with laugh and song.
My hell is day, my heaven is night !
Are not your garments smooth and white ?

I wash the sheets from fever's bed ;
 The babe's first robes—the flounced skirt
 That's whirled in many a glorious waltz,
 And make it clean from the world's dirt.
 I charge so little for the score
 That though you scorn, you bring me more.

What do I care ? My pot of beer
 Is more than all your praise or blame.
 My children died, one after one—
 Did I not wash for you the same ?
 My tears fell fast into the tub
 To “ rub-a-dub, rub, rub-a-dub ! ”

They laid one here ; they laid one there ;
 With stranger's children they knew not ;
 And I have bought no flowers for them—
 No names are writ to mark the spot.
 But as I rub I think and think ;
 Then night comes on, and I must drink.

UPHEAVAL.

THARK to the wind swift waking in the dark.
 Some happy, cosy homestead he'll unroof
 And leave the glowing hearthstone dank and cold.
 Some old, old tree that stands for many a soul
 The symbol of its childhood, youth and love,

Of friends departed like its leaves that fall,
Before the dawn shall totter to its death.
Oh, listen how the windows groan and sigh;
The yellow lamplight flutters up and down,
And round it floats a moth that madly longs
To drown itself in burning floods of light.
The black, black chimney is one hollow roar.
Oh, do not touch my house, thou hungry wind,
For I am calm and happy by my fire,
With all my lovèd faces gathered round,
And all my dreams that have not changed for
years.

I do not wish to change. Pass by, O wind,
Nor drive me from my shelter; I care not
To build another house, however large,
With newer dreams and fires that burn more
bright,

And better friends around. Oh, strike some house,
But pass my little dwelling, god of change.
Ah, see! The walls begin to rock and sway,
The wind is stopping here beside my door.
His mighty hammers beat the masonry.
His strident voice sends terror through my
blood.

In vain I plead—he cannot hear me call.
His blows fall on my roof invincibly.
He will not go away. “Change, change!” he
cries,
And drives me out into the pathless wilds,
All homeless, friendless, old ideals gone,

And no heart for the new ones. On and on,
And never seems a resting-place in view.
It seems eternities since by the fire
I thought my little house so warm, secure,
And all my friends forever, ever mine.
Then I reproach this cruel god of change:
“ When all my walls were shattered into dust,
And all my friends and dreams went out from me,
Or I from them—or maybe, each from each,
Oh, god of change, why struck not thou to dust
A little marble shape of Memory
That points its finger backwards as I go ?
To take all those, and spare that torturing hand
Oh, cruel god, what means it ? ” Thus I cry.
He makes no answer. Silently I take
A pile of stones and lay them one on one,
And build them up into another house,
With pain, with sorrow and with labour dear,
A larger house all unfamiliar,
With wider doors and windows that stretch out
As if to grasp at light and air and sun.
But still my old house haunts me. And I sit
Beside my newer fire without my dreams.
How long ? For ages, ages, so I think,
And then—a voice, a footfall, and a face
With eyes that smile in mine and seem to know,
And once again I make a circle strong,
And bit by bit creeps back that feeling sweet
Of warm security. Till I forget
That old, old house I dwelt in long ago,

Or just remember that I dwelt in it
As in some other house in other life.
And then once more the wind comes, strong and
 wild,
And drives me forth again a wanderer.
Until at last I know that in no house
A human soul that grows can live for aye ;
Until I shrink no more to hear that far
And sullen rumble rising in the hills,
Nor tremble back before the swelling floods,
Nor hide my eyes before the lightning's blaze,
Nor cower behind a heap of senseless stones
And think they make my world. Blow, blow,
 O wind,
And take my house and leave me desolate—
If I may grow. Oh, take my crumbling walls
That keep me from the starshine and the sun,
And all the pathless splendours of the world,
The world whose walls are space, space infinite !
Take thou my friend, my lover, or my tree,
Aye, blow my body into dust itself,
If that too be a wall to pen me in,
But give me over all things, Liberty !
O strong, clean wind, I do not fear thee more,
But rise to greet thee when I hear thy voice ;
I welcome all upheaval and all change,
However fraught with sorrow and with pain,
That bring my feet into a wider house.
Oh, hail and hail, thou clean, destructive wind !

THE UNBURIED DEAD.

3 CANNOT weep, I cannot pray,
I do not joy me at the day
That once did bring me such delight—
Nor at the little stars at night.

The tiny leaves now seem to sigh
To watch the dawn creep up the sky ;
The birds that sing amongst the dew
I think will break my heart in two.

My footsteps have a hollow sound,
As if they fell on churchyard ground,
And so they do—for as I tread
I walk upon myself—long dead.

This is myself who used to sing
And thrill at coming of the Spring,
And look at life with eager eye,
And now I let the world drift by.

I have no hope, I have no fear,
My eyes are calm without a tear—
I hear my friends laugh merrily
And yet it brings no pang to me.

I hear their feet go forth to dance
As though I suffered no mischance,
Those friends who told me should I die
The gracious sun would leave the sky.

They did not break their word—for though
I lie me here so weak and low,
They do not know that I am dead,
For there's no tombstone at my head.

For still my body walks about,
I laugh, and talk, and eat, and shout,
And watch the clock whose fingers say
That I was buried yesterday.

For yesterday—the clock at noon—
I buckled on my prettiest shoon,
And wound a ribbon blue as June
In my brown hair—and hummed a tune.

Oh, wild and sweet the hawthorn spray,
That seemed a thousand things to say,
And there a bird sang such a note
I feared that he would burst his throat.

O softly, silently, I crept
Along the lanes, and as I stepped
Upon a little space of grass,
I heard my lover's footsteps pass.

I hid behind a hawthorn bough,—
How thick and white ! I smell it now,—
As dead folk smell the lilies white
That cover coffins up from sight.

And just as I was going to rush
And cry his name—an awful blush
Crept from my heart and stained my brow
It was my last. I know it now.

I heard my dear Elizabeth,
The truest friend that e'er drew breath,
Laugh in his arms. Then all my blood
Swept upwards in a crimson flood.

And then I heard the linnet sing,
“ O Spring ! O Spring ! O Joy, O Spring ! ”
And there amongst the hawthorn bloom,
I knew that I was in my tomb.

For if the dead can hear at all
That's how they hear a linnet's call ;
And by the blood that bathed my sight
I knew that they had slain me quite.

My mother sews my bridal gown,
And every time she lays it down,
She smiles and sighs, so sad and proud ;
And does not know she makes my shroud.

For every time I tried to speak
My voice died silently and weak ;
I could not tell her that I died
At noon, in all my youth and pride

Elizabeth, my dearest friend,
I'll greet with love until the end,
And Allan, too, both soon and late,
For I've no strength to storm or hate.

I'll smile at them across the street
On each and every time we meet.
Dead women smile behind their veil,
So calm and proud and still and pale.

And when young Robin comes from sea,
Who used to think so much of me,
I'll marry him—he'll never know
That I was dead long, long ago.

And so they'll never guess I'm dead--
For there's no tombstone at my head,
And my dear friend, Elizabeth
Will never know she caused my death.

.

THE MASK.

EVERY soul a mask doth wear ;
I have learnt to know it now ;
Woven fine with cunning care,
Shrouding eyes and mouth and brow.

Sometimes, when it proudest seems
Cruel, satyr-like and grim,
In the soul lie pitying gleams,
In the heart is anguish dim.

Sometimes when it kindliest smiles,
There is cruelty more deep
Than the winding serpent's wiles,
Than the sea where wrecked ones sleep.

Pain and Sorrow slink behind
Even from the fondest fond ;
Like a hurt hare shrinks the mind
Dreading pity from beyond.

If the mask one moment slips,
Ah, what grief the soul must know !
Tear-filled eyes and pain-thrilled lips,
Curses, prayers and raptures show.

Wearing to the gates of death
This dear mask—oh, journey far !

Laid aside with life's last breath,
Then, how beautiful men are.

Then their hidden dreams we see,
All they struggled for and missed,
All their obscure majesty,
Gods and ghouls they clutched and kissed.

There, without one word to say
Speak they true 'gainst time and tide,
Caring not for Yea or Nay,
Unashamed, with mask aside.

A FAREWELL.

FAY, we have had the best, oh lover mine.
Have you not shared my wonder and my
dream,
And all my strong-winged thoughts as bright as
stars
That thrilled us with the music of their wings ?
Have we not talked together, hand in hand,
And climbed the olive hill against the west
To watch the splendours come and wane and
die ?
My fear is as my love is. Let us part !
So many dreams will vanish in our life,
As sea-foam falls again into the deeps.

Come, let us keep this little dream of ours
To stand besides us when the twilight comes,
Let us not try it up against the edge
Of sharp reality—lest it should die,
For dying once it never lives again.
Some other man I love with lesser love,
With lesser fear to hurt as I care less,
May gather up the flowers you held the first,
I cannot let you keep them till they fade.
For oh, with you I'd fear the thread of grey,
And pluck it as a serpent from my brow,
And fear to lose the music from my voice,
And fear to have you stand beside my bed
To watch my ugly gasping at the last,
And see the cold grey shadows round my
eyes,

My eyes filmed o'er with unromantic death.
Why, love of mine, I fear even to die,
Lest love should turn my brave heart cowardly,
And I should cry to death "I will not die!"
I am too fond of peace, and quietly
Would come and go and leave no stir behind,
No slamming of the doors, no passioned cries
To linger after me; but peace, peace, peace.
And I should fear the rags of poverty,
The struggling in the little, noisome streets,
The weary echo of my slip-shod feet
Through little passages to little rooms—
Our love was never meant for little rooms,
Its dwelling place is 'neath the starry heavens,

On great, wide-watered plains where reds and golds
Burn into regal purples with the night.
Or where the moonless forests top the peaks
That seem to prick the littered silvery stars :
By cataracts unfettered should we roam,
And lakes unfathomèd, like minor seas,
Or journey into deserts—where there's space
For such a royal love as this of ours.
Ah, think—the thousand, thousand, thousand
hearts

As happy and as daring and as young,
Who went to live with courage fine and high
In small dark houses shutting out the sun
And missed their way, and hated at the last !
My fear is as my love is. That is great.
Oh, let us guard this little dream of ours,
And keep it as we keep a memory
Of music chiming o'er a moonlit sea,
Or scent of violets in a valley dim,
Or song of lark we see not in the blue,
Nor kill it by the caging. Let it fly
Away and yet away through boundless heaven,
Its song heard o'er the chilly tide of death,
A sweetness that has known no bitterness,
A dream uncaptured, singing still for us,
Whilst other dreams have long been caged and
dumb.
Is it not worth this pang that we shall feel ?
Nay, do not hold my hand and harder make
The bitter struggle. Let me go, I pray.

Well, I am free to go. Come, haste, my feet
Turn, eyes, away from the belovèd face,
Nor tremble, lips, as if ye begged a kiss.
What agony ! But thus we keep a dream,
All unfulfilled, but broken not by fate.
Good-bye again ! May you not hold my hand
One little moment that the pain be less ?
One moment, then we'll part and save our dream.
Ah, God ! You've kissed me and 'tis all undone,
And we must drift with the uncounted throng,
And risk the tiring and the hatred, too.
Oh, traitor, when my heart was growing strong !
But there—what is a dream the more or less ?
Suppose we hate ? Well, in the depths of hell
There may be souls who strive each one 'gainst
each
And yet would never leave the other lone,
Or be left lonely. Here, then is my hand,
For love or hatred, sun or rain, or storm,
For little house or all the wide, wide world,
For honour and dishonour—and the tomb,
And at the last, whatever lurks beyond,
If it be heaven, then heaven—and hell, then, hell.
So that they let us see each other's face,
Smiling or scowling, so that we may see.
Another kiss. Oh, love, how could I think
That we might part to save a little dream ?
A little dream against this love of ours !

WEARINESS.

HOW long the day has seemed to heart and brain,

And weary foot that trudges o'er and o'er
A little space of carpet strewn with crumbs,
And hands that ever ply the same old task !
I love them, God knows, but I get so tired !
Too big or little, which art thou, my heart ?
O, just to stand upon a high, green hill
And hear the mournful music of the wind
Roll through the valleys clad in sunset mists,
And hear the melancholy peewit's cry
Warning the wanderer from his reedy nest—
With every little prattler fast asleep,
And my own thoughts alone to speak to me,
And find a place within my tranquil breast.
To drink for one brief hour the western lights,
And feel the cool, wet winds caress my cheek,
And blow against my body—and the earth,
So strong and bold, uphold me, mortal frail ;
Then let my eye, grown sick of little rooms,
Rove o'er the endless, boundless worlds of
space,

With towering and fantastic lands of cloud,
And feel once more Eternity's loved guest ;
And a deep peace flow from the quiet hills
Into my heart, too narrow or too wide
For motherhood that dwells in dwarfing rooms,
Until it wearies of its heavy crown,—

Ah, just for this, what would I give to-night ?
The hills that bear the little, teasing winds,
And echo back their faintest laugh or sigh,
Should teach me how the mighty, soaring peaks
Scorn not the swift, light clouds that come
and go,
And how the furthest echoes of the hill
Cry back again the foolish, lost lamb's plaint
Until its mother finds it. Then my lambs
On my return should marvel at my look,
Quiet, and calm, and strong as those high peaks
That murmur not against the shrouding mists,
But tower above the storm that girds their
loins
And smile beneath a crown of sun-shot light.

EPITAPH ON A WORKING WOMAN.

NOTHING can disturb her now,
Peaceful heart and peaceful brow ;
Smiling through a filmy veil,
Tired eyes closed, and sweet lips pale.
Tired hands folded on her breast
In a little prayer for rest.
Weary ends that would not meet,
Little cares in house and street,
Vexed and helpless wait outside—
Death has claimed her for his bride.

And his house is small and still,
But more sweet than hidden rill
Is his silence, as you rest,
Tired hands crossed upon your breast.

CINDERELLA.

A MODERN VERSION.

THE shadows played across her face,
The firelight flickered red ;
The hearth-stone grew a lonely place
As dwelling of the dead.

Amongst the ashes warm and white
A cheery cricket sang ;
And little winds tapped low and light,
Homeless but blithe they rang.

Outside, the golden summer moon
Sailed through a deep green sky ;
She listened to the wind's brave tune,
And could not put it by.

“ Oh, fireside light, I've loved thee well
For many a long, long year.
Thy redness, is it heaven or hell ? ”
She cried, in accents drear.

Then rose she from her humble stool,
And drew the curtains wide,
And saw the shimmering valleys cool,
The river's moonlit pride !

She left the brown dish to burn black,
And with uncovered hair,
She walked into the wide-world track,
With wondering, lovely stare.

“ Oh, cricket, in the meadow grass,
How joyously you sing ! ”
“ So glad am I to see you pass,”
Chirped back the cheery thing.

“ Oh, stream that ripples o'er the stone,
How sad you sound, yet sweet ! ”
“ Step in, step in, my pretty one,
And let me lave your feet.”

“ Oh, heather, heather, dark as blood
Besides the brooding stone,
Where do you get your purple hood ? ”
The heather made a moan.

“ I get my purple from the heart
That lonely wears away ;
The last sad drops which from it start
Make one pale, trembling spray.”

“ Oh, peewit, peewit, circling round,
How mournful is your cry ! ”

“ It is my soul, that echoing sound,”
The peewit made reply.

“ Turn back, turn back, thou foolish maid,”
Her godmother then said,
“ Back to thy house-tree’s shielding shade,
And bake thy batch of bread.”

“ I’ll not go back to mix my dough
With tear-drops tired and hot ;
The dish may into pieces go,
And brownies tend the pot.”

“ My god-daughter, be wise and turn,
The world has many a thorn ;
And cares to freeze, and griefs to burn,
And desert lands forlorn.”

“ But griefs and cares sit on my shelf,
Tho’ all are passing small.
Related unto spending pelf—
I’ll harbour those more tall.

“ There’s loneliness in narrow rooms
As well as on the heights ;
And hearth-stones that are only tombs
That stay good spirits’ flights.

“ Come griefs, come cares, with mighty wings,
And arrows tipped with flame ;
To meet them, forth my spirit springs—
They are not mean with shame.

“ Come noble joys and noble cares
To make me stronger grow—
Those rungs of life’s eternal stairs
Up which the great souls go.

“ My song may be a song of grief,
But it shall be my own,
For in its purport is relief ;
Why sigh in undertone ?

“ Let those of earth attend the fire
And in their prisons pine ;
I seek the stars, high and yet higher,
To watch their hearth-fires shine.

“ God bless you, little lights afar
Where I have got no place ;
I wage for you a holy war,
And bear with me your grace.

“ I fight for those who gaze through tears
Into the caverns red,
And see the moments, hours, weeks, years,
Like withered rose-leaves shed.

" I bring to them sun, moon and breeze,
The clean winds from the moor,
And blossoms from the aloe trees,
And lay them at their door."

UNKNOWN.

THEY dubbed her queer, and laughed as she went by,
And knew that she was different in some way,
But still she held her little nook, serene,
And wore just what she would, and had her say.
She never flinched at speaking out her thoughts,
Nor ever hated them for scoff and jest,
But took the name of " odd " as if a crown—
A royal pride within her humble breast.
No numbers to support her, all alone
She set her face against accepted creeds
Because she deemed it right, and them too weak
And old and useless like long-withered reeds.
Her grave is lost beneath the hiding grass ;
Her name is graven not on crumbling stone,
But burns immortal 'midst the pioneers,
Although she lived, and fought, and died unknown.
The famous fields that call Titanic souls
Know nothing nobler—one neglected spot
She toiled and suffered in, with none to cheer,
And never cared that she would be forgot.

THE BASTARD DEAD.

HE is dead ; and the wise elder folk—
They who think that a bird in a nest
Should be blessed by the priest with his book—
Calmly say, old and wise, it is best !
He had just learnt to laugh and to coo,
As the babes of the wed mothers do.

From his coming he ever was small,
With an old-fashioned look in his eyes,
But he filled all my life with his love,
And we two were more wise than the wise.
When in whispers they spoke of my fall,
His warm lips from my heart sucked the gall.

I had borne the great world's brunt of scorn,
All its basilisk glances so cold ;
And I warmed back my heart's frozen faith,
At the sun of his head, kinked with gold.
He was Home, he was Friend, he was Love,
With his croon like a white, happy dove !

But oh, what shall I do with my arms,
And the big, empty space in my breast ?
Yet the wise elder folk creeping round,
Calmly say, old and wise, it is best !

Oh, my soul loved the dear little thing,
Though my finger could boast not a ring.

So I hate them at last for their words,
That some strong man will now pity me ;
Will forgive for a sin he helped not,
When they bury it darkly with thee !
He had just learnt to laugh and to coo,
As the babes of the wed mothers do.

DAWN.

We have watched through the long darkness
for the coming of the dawn,
We have dreamed how the first trembling ray
would shine
Down upon the misty hollows, where the evil
night-owl hoots,
How the light would glide along by peak and
pine ;
But the long dark hours seem endless, as the
famished children weep,
And our hearts with wounded hopes are all
an-ache,
Yet we beat away the spectre who is whispering
in our ears
That the golden light of morn will never break.

Nay we cannot give our hope up. It was born
at midnight drear
And it, crooning, fills our lap through sunless
hours,
And soft-babbles of the shrouded meads, tired,
waiting to reveal
Song of birds, and sheen of streams, and glow
of flowers.
Oh, there's something like a glorious bell that rings
within the soul,
And the mist can never dull its thrilling tone,
Shouting out that Freedom cometh—cometh surely
to mankind,
And will throw her sunny rays from zone to
zone.

For the world is growing wiser—the sad tears
that flood men's sight
Help them to clearer vision day by day ;
As we clasp hands through the darkness we feel
sure that soon or late,
O'er the black hill's crest will ride that welcome
ray.
And the sobbing of the children will be turned
to laughter sweet,
And Woman will go honoured, noble, wise,
Linking arms with Man, her comrade, as the high-
way opens wide,
When the tears have washed the shadows from
our eyes.

SUMMER IN THE SLUMS.

HOW hot it is ! The houses row on row
Bake in the sun's broad glare, which, blinding,
pours
On deserts of interminable streets,
With open doors that gasp to the hot air
And beg in vain for one clean, wandering wind !
All day the waggons creak with labouring groan
Across the gritty roads. Not even a tree
Struggles for life amidst this bare, blind grey ;
No flower of joyous sap, no hopeful leaf—
Only the children in the alleys play,
Building a short-lived heaven in hell's hot
gulfs.
The glaring sky, the burning dusty roads,
Blister the weary faces, weary feet,
Till parched lips moan and sigh, " Oh, God, 'ow
'ot ! "
With oaths that fain would open heaven's gate
And burn its cruel, unrelenting laws.
This is sweet Summer that the poets chant,
Singing of hills asheen with moist, deep blue ;
Of brown-legged children—careless laughing elves,
Gathering flowers by glassy brooks that flash
And glide through alpine gorges, deep and green
And dark with pine—soft singing as they go
Of far-away unmelted, gleaming snows,
Whilst faery echo answers them their song.
But for the poor, O God, how hot it is !

THE GOSSIP.

PERCHED in the window seat,
I watch the people pass,
And listen to their feet ;
 The lover and his lass
I spy behind my blind, and tell my heart their
joy.

And if, at times, I tell
 The things I overhear—
And add to them, as well,
 Without a pang of fear—
Why, greater folk than I do characters destroy !

I love the murmurs loud ;
 The voices far away
That float from a great crowd
 Betwixt the night and day—
The little mystic sounds that follow with their
feet.

I merely like to know !
 I strip their motives bare,
And view them, high or low,
 With curious, asking stare,
The mean or mighty souls that dwell within one
street.

I watch the people walk,
In sun, in rain, in sleet ;
And then of them I talk,
Now bitterly, now sweet,
So do the men who write great books that the
world reads.

The lover who betrays,
He fears me in his heart ;
I read its hidden ways ;
The whispering I first start—
And on its rustling track the wedding day he
speeds.

And as the hearse creeps past
I read the Dead's sealed book,
From first page to the last,
And bid the watchers look !
So do biographers of those who've served us
well !

Music is talk in notes,
Pictures in colours fair,
Though they be finer thoughts,
And sweeten more the air,
They are but talk, at most, and silence wields
her spell.

Why should I hold my tongue ?
I help full many a cause,

And hinder many a wrong,
As well as written laws !

The time will come when all lie dumb beneath
a stone !

If I some wrong have done,
Some good I've also worked ;
I've watched, in shade or sun,
Nor e'er that duty shirked.

More room, and I, maybe, had been a mighty one !

I might have struck down lies
With patience and with strength,
Till they no more might rise—
And shown the truth, at length —
Tattle might be a god in wider chambers bred.

What cared I for my home ?
But others I loved well !
For them I far would roam,
Some wondrous thing to tell ;
I might have reared (who knows !) in Parliament
my head.

To talk and not to do
Is genius in its way,
In sun, or rain, or blue,
To loiter day by day,
And get half-way to nowhere—and then turn back
again.

So had I been a man
I should have passed, I know,
(I do the best I can !)
To where, all in a row,
The speakers, not the doers, pour forth the thun-
dering strain !

CRADLE SONG.

GROW strong, grow strong, my darling
child,
O how I love thee, infant small !
Yet my heart throbs more warm and wild
To think thou growest strong and tall.

I'll tell thee of the singing pine
That's black against the sunset red,
And where the little fairies dine,
And how the fire-fly lights their bed.

I'll tell thee of the sun and rain ;
How rainbows spread across the sky ;
How Winter decorates the pane ;
And of the frog with beauteous eye.

The summer grass is green and long ;
The summer sky is bright and blue ;

The summer birds sing many a song,
And we will sing together, too.

Grow strong, grow strong, my baby sweet !
I'll guard thee as an infant small,
But yearning comes with constant beat
To see thee grow more strong and tall.

A secret tear may leave mine eye
To see thee leave me more and more,
And pass at last, without a sigh,
To the wide world without the door.

But grow thou strong, oh, branch of me,
Till from my tender timbers young
An arrow for pure liberty,
Divinely made, at greed is flung.

Better thy death for honour's sake,
The lowering cloud of worldly scorn,
The flesh to waste, the heart to break,
Than leave the world as if unborn.

Grow strong and tall for noble grief,
The world has need, my son, of men,
Though sometimes, trembling like a leaf,
I may wish thee a child again.

THE CHILDREN OF THE POOR.

HAVE you ne'er seen some sweet-breathed
flow'r

That trembled high o'er world of grey ?
Nor felt the next bleak wind would shower,
And blow its beauty bright away ?
Such is the brief and fragile joy
Of poor folk's children—blossoms fair !
Chill winds of Care and Toil destroy
The innocence that comes—from where ?

Have you ne'er seen the dewy crown
That decks the branches of the thorn,
And feared to see it sliding down
To leave their blackness all forlorn ?
E'en as we gaze the bough is shook
By ruthless breeze or careless wight—
The thorn is naked when we look,
And vanished its translucent light !

But oh, how sad it is to know
That childhood, coming not again,
Should lose its happy youthful glow,
All for an idle dream of gain ;
That sunny worlds of magic green
Where fairies laugh and dance and play

Should turn into a smoke-grimmed scene,
Where Joy and Beauty fly away.

The children of a newer day
Whose light e'er now comes o'er the brink
Of this dark night, with faint, pure ray,
Shall deep of dreaming glories drink.
The sheath shall guard the tender soul
Till strong, mature—then, flung aside,
The slow-won colours of the whole
Shall be the nation's joy and pride.

OLD WOMAN'S SONG.

THIS is the meaning of growing old—
Faltering feet that used to fly ;
Blood that chills with the winter cold ;
Threading your needle with aching eye ;
Tired as a lone ship adrift on the sea !
Weary, so weary ! Ah, me !

This is the meaning of growing grey—
Losing your children one by one ;
Wedded, and buried, or living away ;
Like an old tree, when its leaves are gone.
None to say “ Rest you,” how tired you be,
Weary, so weary ! Ah, me !

FAITHS OUTWORN.

THERE is no sadder hour in all our lives
Than when we find the spirit has outgrown
Some creed, or faith, which in the by-gone days
Has seemed sufficient for its joy alone.
And every soul has got its lumber-room
Where worn-out garbs of thought are laid
aside
When by some burst of sunlight pure and strong
It finds they are not meet for cleanly pride.
The gentle and the weak bring lavender
With which awhile to keep the moths away,
Stroke their worn folds with tender hands and
sigh,
“ They were the world to us but yesterday ! ”
But they perchance more noble and more
strong
Cry “ Take them, Time, for they are thin and
old ;
We have outgrown them and we need them not,
For they no longer shield us from the cold.
Take them into thy ragbags of the past,
For every precious thing we've picked away
To make more beautiful a garment new—
Take them, O Time, for they have had their
day.”

THE GIFT.

THREE is one who will ask but of you that you bring her back beads from the sea ;
There is one who will ask but of you that you sing her gay songs in the dusk ;
There is one who will ask but of you that you walk tall and proud at her side,
By the door of her rival who laughs, where her old lover sits in the porch ;
There is one who will ask but of you that you love her by night and by day,
Who is weary, and waiting, and lone—and would e'en make the best of the worst !
There is one who will ask for your soul, but like quicksilver keep back her own.
But for me, I ask nothing at all,—save the sound of your voice in the gloom,
As you pass by my door to their doors, with a curse at your horse as he slips,
'Neath your hurried impatience to fly by my dark, insignificant door.
For the love that is love overmuch may win nothing—just nothing at all,
But the curse in the heart of the night and the longing to get by the door.

A FIRESIDE FANCY.

LET my house be one of a little row
Where I hear the people pass to and fro
Behind thin walls of plaster—
Hear them laugh, and sing, and rake up the fire
When the air is chill, and the wind mounts higher ;
And almost their hearts beat faster.

Let me hear the tramp of their children's feet,
The innocent laughter so shrill and sweet,
And the old brown cradle swinging ;
Let me muffle my tread and hush my breath
As over their threshold steps life and death,
The sound or the silence bringing.

For there waits my house in a little row
Where I shall hear no one pass to and fro,
Nor sound of laughter or weeping—
'Twixt walls that echo no neighbour's knock,
That never can thrill to the cradle's rock,
Between neighbour and neighbour sleeping.

A MODERN MAGDALEN.

TWAS God made me so beautiful, and man
shut me away,
Like a red rose in a small, dark room to wither
day by day,
And the devil put into my heart the hot little
whisper " Nay."

The others sang, and joked, and talked until the
day was done,
But I sighed as I watched the free birds fly or a
passing shaft of sun,
And the spotted mirror upon the wall made strange
thoughts through me run.

For the face I saw in the misty glass had a halo
round its head,
Its eyes were still lakes, sapphire-blue ; its mouth,
carnation red ;
And it did not look like the face of a girl to have
nothing but daily bread.

When I passed the rich man's garden as to work
I slowly came,
I spied through hedges, dimly green, a many-
coloured flame ;
And knew that the tulip's sun-loving heart and
my own heart were the same.

The God who made the violet that loves the
moist, cool shade,
He made the heart of the tulip that is gold-splashed
and unafraid,
So the tulip is planted to catch the sun as a thing
for the sunshine made.

Grey were the walls of the workroom, where, in
the summer's heat,

The tired flies crawled so wearily to the drone of
the noisy street,
And I heard, to the whizz of the whirling wheel,
my own heart's weary beat.

And a weary fear did clutch me of growing grey
and bent

As the woman who worked next to me with a
dreary, sad content,

And who never knew when the sky was blue, and
whose life was a lengthened Lent.

So I wandered away and left it, and found it easy
to go,

With the light of the beauty God gave me, and
the scorn and the whispers low,

And the door of the friend that was shut in my
face, and the flattery of my foe.

O God, I am very sinful, and I've nothing at all
to say,

Save "The floor of the workroom was dusty, the
walls of the workroom grey,

And men for the sake of their bankbooks were
grinding my beauty away.

" The gift of a wonderful beauty should be for
the meek, or the free,

Or the prisoners who pine in the prisons may sell
it in misery;

With God's beauty, hard toil, and the devil—oh,
where was the chance for me?"

I loved all the mystic beauty that shines in a
thousand things,
The flower that grows by the roadway—the rain-
bow glitter of rings,
And the cool, stately beauty of marble, and the
glory of butterflies' wings.

It was only a chance. I took it. The light was
a fading fire,
And not the big sun I had wanted. It flickered
and died in the mire.
And it may be my fall was the greater for heights I
had dared to aspire.

It may be the pride in my bosom, and the hatred
of it all,
(Whilst good folk drudging and praying were
thankful for things so small)
Is the force that shall lift the dead level more
near to its ultimate goal?

That shall sound like a trumpet pealing o'er
Patience, fear and cant,
And make them ready to risk things, to snatch at
the sun they want—
I failed, and went down in the darkness. I fell,
and I know they shan't.

DIANA'S SONG.

SWIFT, mad joy of the flying wood
And cataract's thundering roar !
And the glassy green where the April flood
Stands still by a sedgy shore.
But mine is the rushing and rapturous joy
That the cataract knows, or the heart of a
boy.

The brushwood crackles as I tear by
And the birds fly from their nest,
And the violets breathe forth a scented sigh
As I disturb their rest,
But mine is the joy of the travelling wind
That is daring and bold, that you never can
bind.

O laughing Cupid, I have no fear ;
Go shoot your timorous maids,
Born not for the blush, the sigh, or the tear,
I am queen of the woodland glades !
For mine is the joy of the glorious sea
That is tossing forever, immortal and free.

No burning passion shall hunt me down
To ceaseless, restless care,
Nor my heart bleed deep at a master's frown—
I am free as the virgin air.

And who then would barter such freedom as this
For the frail, fleeting joy that is found in a
kiss ?

O swift, mad joy of the flying wood,
And cataract's thundering roar !
And the glassy green where the April flood
Stands still by a sedgy shore.
But mine is the rushing and rapturous joy
That the cataract knows, or the heart of a
boy.

EIGHTEEN.

E SHIMMERING land of beauty and romance
Locked with a fairy key,
Over whose flower-strewn sward what light feet
dance—
But mine no more, ah, me !

What scented winds sway gaily blossomed trees
Almost within the reach,
Then swing them upwards in a laughing breeze—
Bright blossoms like the peach !

Unearthly shells are scattered by its shore
That sing into the ear
Sweet songs that I shall hear, O, nevermore !
Sweet songs that have no fear.

There, star-white feet through sunny waters walk,
 And glad hands garlands weave,
 Whilst silvery voices chime in merry talk
 That leaves no time to grieve.

How quickly dry the tears of rainbow sheen !
 For Hope her home makes here,
 In this fair country that we call Eighteen—
 She strings each glittering tear.

What boat was that which bore us far away
 From this sweet shrine of dreams,
 With only memory, one pure, scented spray
 Snatched from its sunlit streams ?

What boat is that shall bear us back again ?
 Back to its first, fresh green,
 And blossoms never beaten by the rain ?
 Seas soundless flow between.

PAST.

JHAVE been loved, I would not die,
 Or call to Death because Love went,
 Bidding him seal my weary eye.
 Love, passing, kissed me. Rest content,

Thou mateless heart within my breast
That sees the brushwood bursting green,
And sighs above an empty nest !
Some would be glad that love had been.

Let the loud rains beat long and drear,
And hoarse winds shout from scar to scar,
Love has gone by—I need not fear
Again to lose him at the bar.

Love has gone by. I shall not miss
Him in the labyrinths of the wood ;
Warm on my lips he left his kiss,
And still it burns there, red as blood.

I made for him no golden chains ;
I did not even whisper “ Stay ! ”
I watched him fly o'er distant plains,
And knew that I had had my day.

Let rolling seas strive to the sky,
No hopes of mine are there to sink !
I stand no more with aching eye
To watch the ships come o'er the brink.

I have been loved. I do not weep
That love went by upon the wind.
An hour of love is high and deep,
And who the rose's scent may bind ?

I do not dread the bed of dust ;
I do not fear the chilly dark—
Love's kiss was warm with hope and trust,
And joyous as the soaring lark.

A DREAM GARDEN.

HAD I a garden it should be a-blow
With poppies scarlet red,
Have hedges high, a place where I might go
When all seemed dull and dead ;
A blaze of colouring gorgeous as the glow
Of sunsets overhead.

There should be sunflowers tall with crowns of
gold,
And spikes of lilies rare ;
The mosses green from hill, and field, and wold
Should richly nestle there ;
There should be silvery margu'rites, quaint and
old,
And roses blightless fair.

Love-in-a-Mist should droop its heads of blue
O'er ladlove smelling sweet ;
Carnations plenty bloom there, dashed with dew,
And the rich "Tweet ! tweet ! tweet !"
Come from a nestling bird, with the faint sough
Of all sweet airs and fleet.

Flowers for all moods ; the lilies purely white
For when the soul turned saint ;
Roses to fill the heart with glad delight
For love that knows no taint ;
To droop with, soar with, red and blue and
white—
And love without restraint.

A LITTLE GIRL.

“ **L**ET me try,” she eager said,
Voice a-tremble with desire
Sweet as fairy fingers swept
O'er a silver, hidden lyre,
Upward look of hope and fear ;
Half a smile, and half a tear !
“ I'll be gone five by-and-by.
I can do it. Let me try ! ”

“ Let me try ! ” Ah, little girl,
With the eyes of harebell blue,
And an elf in every curl,
Much to try awaiteth you.
Life and Love and Death, I see,
Beauteous, awful Trinity ;
Do not fear you will be late.
Wait a moment, darling, wait !

You shall have your hair up, sweet,
Fastened with a jewelled comb ;
Wear a gown down to your feet ;
Further than the garden roam !
Keep your fairies whilst you may,
In the golden land of play ;
When that time comes by-and-by,
You will laugh, but we shall sigh.

Noble joys and cares shall sit
In your heart—grown wide with years ;
Saddest tears be rainbow lit ;
Brightest smiles be tinged with tears.
Land where mother can redress you,
With magic kisses heal and bless you,
Is the land, the pilgrims say,
(Pilgrims old and bent and gray)
Where divide tears, smiles, you may—
Where the happy fairies play.

THE BUILDING.

“ **M**AY, strike not back—Forbear,” my mother said,
“ ‘Tis woman’s part to suffer and forgive ;
To kiss the striker fierce and passionate,
That gentler, sweeter thoughts in him may live.”

She was a woman cast in mildest form,
Who would have loved the dog that bit her
hand,
And ever strove to quell the healthful storm,
And bring with words of love the boat to land.
I did not wish to wound her, so I turned
And kissed my brother with a Judas kiss,
Whilst in my heart the fires of anger burned,
One righteous, honest, noble blow to miss !
I learned to smile, to run away and fear
My comrade, who could never understand
Why his injustice brought the weakling tear ;
Why I withheld, controlled, my upraised hand.
I grew, and grew, and learned to smile so well,
They thought within my pretty careless head
No thought there was—my heart, as fierce as hell
In its rebellion, innocent—and dead !
I fought my foes with smiles and dulcet words
That held a hidden poison—turned my neck
So that my jewels trembled ; sang like birds
In summer woods—man's happiness to wreck.
I never asked for justice then, but stole
A mean revenge—made helpless with a kiss
This Titan, who had been a brother soul,
Betrayed him, scorned him, slew him—grew to
this,
This shimmering serpent form, of haunting guile,
Because I stayed the blow, and learned to smile.

CIVILIZATION.

E BUST of Clytie in a windowed niche ;
 A chat of some new flower cult, or the stars ;
 A babel of the nation's mingled tongues ;
 From splendid, frowning Beethoven some bars
 Sounding like waves upon a rocky shore—
 “ How grand is Life,” cry two, or three, or four.

Out in the street, hoarse-voiced the flower girl cries
 Poet's narcissus, with a shuddering breath,
 Clutching with claw-like hands her sieve-worn
 shawl
 And on her face the pallid look of death,
 Or else the purple flush that comes from gin ;
 Some sculptor carve her, then ! Nay, she's too
 thin.

Look at the faces by the city lamp—
 Pride, greed, servile humility and whine ;
 The lean professor yellow as his books,
 The navvy dull—the joyful one, from wine !
 The idler bored to death, the stitcher pale,
 The unloved child whose language is a wail.

Is this then our grand climax ? Was our toil
 Up through the countless ages but for this ?

That some may wear the flower, but most the thorn ?

Then Progress lured us with a wanton's kiss !
What, all these struggles, failures, lessons taught
For one fine scholar—and the others, naught ?

All this, the gem-like rooms of colour rare,
The magic beauty of the poet's word,
May come to one—whilst endless hovels stretch
Through streets where music's voice is never heard ?

This weary march up dizzy steeps of time
For one flower's subtle scent—and all this slime ?

Had we not better stayed beside our fire
In the dim cave, low down beside the beast,
And shared his calm content, his savage power,
Wandered beside the lake, and to the east,
That streamed with unknown fires as day begun,
Out-stretched our lithe, strong arms to greet the sun ?

Sun-worship ! Now, men worship barren gold,
Tread bloody, worldly ways o'er human hearts,
To count their wealth by figures in a book,
And praise a nation for its clustered marts,
Great God, keep me a pagan ; in this night
Of Mammon-worship, let me worship light.

But no, Nature or God would never mock
The creatures, born with pain, to die with
pain,
And force them through these endless grooves o
change

Without some noble end, some glorious gain ;
Some hope to reach the lowest, weakest, worst,
The trampled, branded, loathed, self-hated,
curst !

These jewelled, perfumed robes and beggar's
rags

Will pass away, and fettered Art steal forth
From private prisons out into the streets

That all may see her beauty and her worth.
The gatherer of the orchard will sing clear
The mighty master's music, with tuned ear.

And she who sells narcissus in the rain

Will set them in blue bowls in Springtime
room,

And love the faint, far scent that now she hates,
And walk the native vales where first they
bloom

And for the first time in this vaunted land
Labour and Love and Art walk hand in hand.

THE HERETIC.

I AM a Heretic, they say. They drag me through
the summer day
Towards my burning. Is it true ? O Jesu, but
the sky is blue !
Death is so cold, and Life so warm. How could I
do them any harm ?
A simple soul who just spake out a simple thought,
nor dreamed of Doubt,
What was it that they feared ? One word—one
little word, then naked sword,
The knotted rope around my wrist which yesterday
my lover kissed,
And every eye shows fear and scorn which smiled
and worshipped yestermorn.
Only my dog—the dog that he was jealous of—
keeps close by me—
Jesu ! They've stabbed him ! There—he tears
the man who stabbed. Ha ! ha ! my prayers !
I know not that my heart could feel such bitter
hate, cold, fierce as steel.
Thy pardon, Mary, mother mild—they've killed
my dog, mine from a child !
O, frightened heart, how fast you beat to hear the
tramping of their feet,
Thronging from high place and from low, to see
me tortured as I go !
What was it that I sudden spoke ? T'was to my
lover, and my yoke
Was just his arms, and swift I said—What was it,
brain ? He turned his head

And gave me one long, awful look, as on a leper,
then he took
His crucifix from out his breast, and left me. This
is all the rest,
This surging crowd. And how they hiss ! Who
told them, then ? There was his kiss
Hovering above me, and I said, as to a soul my
soul had wed,
A simple word or two that came into my mind
like radiant flame.
I know it lit me through and through, and then he
groaned—O sky, how blue !
And worst of all, I cannot think what 'tis I die for,
on the brink
Of this dark death. What was't I said ? This
blessing, Lord ! He turned his head—
Ah, me, 'tis gone, and to the pyre I go, nor know
why burns the fire.
Will someone know who sees it leap, and catch it
as it haunts their sleep ?
But as for me, I have forgot. I only fear, and
feel the knot,
And hear their hungry, hungry cries ring upwards
to the smiling skies.
And yesterday they spoke me fair. Oh !—There
an idiot pulled my hair,
A foolish idiot, whom I tossed a silver coin once.
All is lost.
He pulled the hair my lover loved—and he stood
by and never moved,

And watched the idiot's leering grin. And I—I
watched him, and his chin
Was trembling. Should men tremble so, and lift
no finger when we go,
When mud is thrown, and then a stone? Stand
still with but a foolish groan,
Whilst my dog followed? As he stood and saw
my brow daubed with my blood,
The brow he called a pearl—pure moon, and kissed,
and kissed, and ne'er had done,
He shuddered like a frightened child, with pallid
lips and eyes all wild.
I pitied him. Quick! Let me die before my
Love itself goes by!
Quick! Let me feel the burning flame whilst
there is sweetness in his name.
Ah, me, 'tis gone, dear Lord, 'tis gone, with empty
heart I die alone—
For something that I have forgot, ah, me, upon
the very spot
Where at the fountain's misty fall I laughed and
sang to toss my ball.
The fire! My hair, it takes my hair! O Grief,
O Pain, O mad Despair!
My brain—it reels—I hear my screams like horrid
echoes heard in dreams.
My brain! My brain is bursting! Why—I now
remember why I die.
It comes again, the living thought. Oh, Joy, I
do not die for nought!

THE GREAT MAN'S WIFE.

ALWAYS the crowd, the crowd, from first to last ;

The crowd that crowns and scourges in an hour,
And rends and fawns, with great chameleon mind

That changes colour with the ruling power ;
The crowd he loved and toiled for, thrusting e'en
The god-like love to take a second place
Before his thought for them—pressing from streets
Of hutch-like houses to behold his face.

Their ceaseless knock was ever on our door,
Their ceaseless inroads through his heart, with
Care

Preceding them, yet fondest Love before
With torch-light clear—though oft behind
Despair !

And half the little love he gave to me
Was thrown in moments as I sat and heard
With gentle patience all his plans for them,
The outside throng. How all his spirit stirred
At thought of them, the People ! Yet had he
One syllable let fall too great, obscure,
Lo ! how their clapping would have changed to
stones,

And all forgotten been grand work and pure.
What was their love to mine ? A puff of smoke
Changed by the movement of the fickle wind

And scattered into air, but mine was rock
Deep-rooted in the earth, and firm reclined.
He had not space for e'en a country rest,
Or where the sea's white breakers rushing proud
Eternally are craving. He felt lone
As in a desert, absent from the crowd.
He said a crowd was just a single soul
With many moods, he knew, yet one clear soul
As the vast sea that smiles or surges wild
Is one great salt tide from the furthest pole.
He loved them so ! Right to the very end
His heart was with them. As I leaned to catch
The last faint echo of his fading voice
And heard the restless ticking of his watch
Beneath the pillow, suddenly he said
“*They come at eight,*” and with the words fell dead ;
Without one word to me, one little word
To bear through years as barren as before !
And then I heard the voices of the crowd
Who came to ask his welfare at the door.
Not even grief is mine alone. They come
And plead to share my tears, this mighty crowd,
In which not one doth wish as I do now
To follow where he leads in cold, wan shroud.
His voice has sunk to silence—in a while,
A very little while, they will forget,
And he will be all mine, and memory
Will live in just one heart—her eyes still wet.

LOST DREAMS.

WHERE do they flee to, those sweet dreams
departed

We loose on the air like a brood of bright doves,
With their eyes full of mystery and dew-gleam
and fire-flame,

God-like aspirations—fair, unfulfilled loves ?
The songs that elude us, too sweet for the singing,

That flit by and will not be netted in words ?
There's surely some valley of green, slumb'rrous
shadow

Where angels of hope tend our broken-winged
birds !

Somewhere and sometime the tired world shall
find them,

Shall catch the glad beat of their home-coming
wings !

All the songs that were sung not, the loves that
were crowned not,

As if through the silence some god touched the
strings.

From out that dim valley where sound murmuring
waters,

Where burns not the sunshine, where drips not
the rain,

The dreams that we lost on a far-away morning
Shall come pure and whole to the world once
again.

Dante, who gazed hollow-eyed after Beatrice ;
Beethoven, the king whom a woman disdained—
They who gave to the world all the song of their
passion,

In winning had lost ; in the losing had gained !
Great hearts that are broken by sorrows, thick
falling,

Crushed low by the heels of the leaden despairs,
Have flung in their suffering sweet odours
immortal,

As angels might swing high on heaven's shining
stairs !

Fair dreams that were bred of our love and our
longing,

It is not in vain that we pay the great cost ;
For to-day or to-morrow some sad one will find
them—

Since someone will find them they cannot be
lost.

In yonder green valley deep down 'twixt the
mountains

Their wings will grow strong for the journey to
be ;

When floats the low whisper of "Now the world
needs you!"

Our dreams will come forth for the whole
world to see.

HOME THIRST.

WITH APOLOGIES TO GERALD GOULD.

THE white road wanders up and down beneath
the sun and moon,
And sure the one would follow it were crazy as a
loon ;
For if we danced our lives away ; or at the least,
our shoes,
We found not half so much, I trow, as what the
heart must lose.

West for the one who's of the West, South for the
one who's South ;
But Northern names taste sweet to me as honey
in the mouth ;
One sprig of heather from our moors for all your
pine-topped hills,
And for your cataract's thundering might—one
gem-drop from our rills !

I know not where the white road runs, and just as
little care,
Except that it creeps loving back, to home, and
all that's there ;
Yes, dear are all the winding ways, wherever they
may roam,
For North, or South, or East or West, they every
one lead Home.

KNOWLEDGE.

I AM not sorry to have quaffed the cup
Filled with the honey and aloes of life ;
Dear as I loved the country of cool shade,
Not to have missed the city's heat and
strife.

Glad to have wandered, poor amongst the poor,
And in the anguish of my sisters' moan
Stretched helping hands, forgetful of my need,
And known their sorrow greater than my own.

Glad to have felt the sting of unearned blame
If that has taught my lips to be more kind ;
Nor ever wish that life had kinder been
If I grew strong with fighting 'gainst the
wind.

Glad to have known the homesick loneliness,
And wandered through the night that had no
star,—

Better to plunge into the unknown sea
And learn the worst—than loiter at the bar.

O cup of pain, and tears, and knowledge dear,
That flowed like fire along each throbbing vein ;
Galvanic heat that thrilled me through and
through
I would not have my innocence again.

Glad to have quaffed where million lips have
been,

I, laughing, lift the goblet in my hand,
Whilst all my spirit casts a bright, brave smile,
That it has drunk—and learned to understand !

ETERNITY.

3 SOUGHT this angel, whose deep eyes
Are sparks of everlasting fire—
Pursuing through star-littered skies
Until my mortal feet did tire.

Then in the tales of mighty men
With courage flaming as the sun,
Whose iron heel tramped the ferny glen—
Death stamped them low as day was
done !

I sought him still, in cloisters grey,
With moss-grown tablets half-erased,
That echoed now to childish play,
Yet ever fled the form I chased.

The hours seemed only as the leaves
That, trembling, decked the tree of Time ;
E'en as the whispering aspen grieves,
Then drops into the slow stream's slime.

Until two hands beneath my chin
 Raised up my saddened face to his,
The priceless crown of love to win—
 Eternity within a kiss !

The castle crumbles, dour and grey,
 A wreck within a waveless sea ;
That kiss shall bear me up alway
 Through cycles of Eternity.

O'er golden roads of suns untold,
 My mortal feet unharmed will pass
Amongst the blazing stars of old,
 As if but daisies in the grass.

Oh, angel of the haunting eyes,
 Thou pourest out thy mystic bliss,
Freely for all below the skies,
 Immortals are we—by a kiss.

The sallow, scrubbing servant girl
 Becomes a holy, lovely thing
Wherein the soul doth bright unfurl
 To hear the rushing of Love's wing.

The dusty workman, bent and pale,
 Who sighs to hear the whistle's shriek,
Sails in a ship of purple sail
 As his tired wife doth kiss his cheek.

And children's kisses ! Could we see
These unseen angels as they go,
How sweet and shining would they be,
All robed in innocence, like snow.

And mother's kisses ! Did we sink
Into hell's farthest, darkest spot,
Her tears would be our fieriest drink,
Her kiss would bless and burn us not.

A life is not a little flower
With which a blind child's hand doth play
Pulling the petals, hour by hour,
And laughing as they blow away.

The clock that ticks upon the wall,
The calendar of months and years,
Are crumbling to a mighty fall ;
They mark not off our sighs and tears.

Whole centuries of deepest joy
Meet in one tiny moment's space,
As some but lately dreaming boy
Sees by the sun his sweetheart's face.

We need not go to Juliet's tomb,
Or hers within that city gay,
Who buried low her youthful bloom,
Watering with tears both night and day.

Yon faltering pair who cross the street,
Whose pulse now beateth faint and slow,
Breathe odours that are passing sweet,
Like roses buried under snow.

Not books, nor war's steel-knitted breast,
Nor gold though piled deep as the sea,
But just a kiss, when life is best,
Shall save our souls immortally.

THE COQUETTE.

3 WIN men's hearts with a little sigh,
With the quivering lash of a downcast eye,
Then I toss them away with a mocking laugh,
Oh, as if they were only so much chaff !
And what is their pain is my dancing joy,
And the boy of an hour back is no more a boy.

I was born in the world with a mighty thirst,
And within my soul is a room accurst,
Where love never steps with his dimpled feet,
With his gleaming arrows and laughter sweet,
And over the door of that room is writ
“Conquest” and with flame every letter is lit.

Yet I envy the lovers who saunter by
When the bright stars burn in the deep, green sky,

Who can see only one in a world so wide,
Whilst my heart is that of the shifting tide,
That is never true to one narrow shore,
But wins them, and scorns them for evermore.

When I was a child beside the brook
The pebbles up from their bed I took,
And I wondered why all their colours had fled,
Then I cast them back on the brook's chill
bed,
But my sister kept hers for many a day,
And wept when she lost it in childish play.

I think the sirens who sit and sing
By river and ocean in fitful spring
And draw with their music the brave ships down
Whilst the women wait in the distant town,
Must sometimes grieve in the midst of their
glee
For wrecks that they sink in the sunless sea ;

Must sometimes ask why so selfishly, *I*
Forever attract, forever deny,
Why I here wait alone on the iron rock
Just to draw the ships to the dreadful shock,
Whilst faithful women who wait in the town
Are forgotten for me, and the ships go down.

I think that sometimes, or soon or late,
The men I have drowned with the kiss of fate

Will send me a soul that shall laugh at my cry,
That will heed not my moaning, but let me die ;
And the wraith of the siren left unkissed
Shall vanish away in the peaceful mist.

WHILST ONE REMAINS.

WHILST there is left in this broad land of ours
One hungering child, be it for bread or
flowers,
Though all the rest go happy 'neath the skies,
A stain across our country's honour lies
Whilst one remains.

Within a world of women pure and sweet
Whilst there's one wretched outcast on the street
Selling the fragments of her soul for bread,
The rest by lower paths must aye be led,
Whilst one remains.

Though we have access to the finest thought
One darkened mind, unlettered and untaught,
Throws its dull shade across our stolen light.
Turns half our sunny pleasure into night,
Whilst one remains.

Though all life's sweetest joys were poured on me
I could not 'scape the brand of slavery ;
My quivering soul must wear the festering chains
Must feel the slave's hot tears and bear his pains,
Whilst one remains.

WAITING.

(W) H, I think of a myriad things
As I wait for his coming at night,
With the child in its cradle asleep,
Like a rose-bud—so lovely and white ;
With an agonised cry round the house
From the restless, dissatisfied wind,
Till I think it is maybe her ghost
On a visit, some comfort to find.

For once she sat as I sit here now,
With a hope and a fear deep within,
With a start at the red cinder's fall,
And a clasp of her hands, pale and thin ;
Then she hearkened the wind round the house,
And the clock with its slow, steady boom,
Till she shivered and wondered the while
If there was but herself in the room.

In her life-time we two never met ;
There is only a picture hangs there

Of her face that was anxious and worn
'Neath the crown of her heavy, dark hair ;
But I sometimes feel that she is near,
 And waits here for him also with me ;
That she knows all the grief in my heart,
 And is sorry as woman can be.

Well, she bore him no infant, at least,
 To lie hushed on her bosom, and smile,
Till her eyelids drooped heavy with tears,
 At the thought of the world and its guile.
Oh, the sorrow if it should grow foul,
 And its innocence suffer the stain !
She may sleep in her grave without fear,
 Whilst my heart has its love and its pain.

Oh, so weary for slumber am I !
 I alone such a vigil must keep ;
Nay, my soul, there are many as sad,
 And like me, they must listen and weep ;
And a terror as piercing as fire
 Grips the heart as the door is flung wide,
And a purple-faced tyrant sprawls in
 With a growl like a maniac's pride.

So I think of a myriad things,
 Of his old mother gentle and frail,
She who thinks of him still as a child
 That she rocked at her breast, soft and pale.

Then I think of the falsehoods I tell
In the letter I send her each week,
That he's steady and good as can be—
With the mark of his hand on my cheek !

And I think of the bright, bonnie days
When I lived with my sweet sisters three,
And we sang like four larks in the spring,
Surely none were so happy as we !
Of the roses we pinned at our waists,
The gay ribbons we twined in our hair,
And the lilt of the merry, old tunes
In the days all unshadowed by Care.

My dear Mary ! she died in her youth,
And kind Nell who came next, lives away,
And she bears a new baby each year,
Whilst sweet Susan is lonely and gray,
As she stitches and stitches for bread,
And the people who lodge her are queer,
She has lost the free laughter and jest
And has taken to saving, I hear.

Yes, this life is a weird tangled skein
As I sit here and ponder at night ;
There are threads that are red as heart's
blood
There are threads that are black—but few
bright.

'Tis a puzzling and troublesome task
To make out just the course they all run,
And I give up at last, with the hope
That it's somehow all right when life's
done.

My dear Mary ! she died in her youth,
Ere the gold had gone out of her hair,
Whilst the laughter came light to her lips
And her heart was unwithered by care.
It is we who live on change the most,
For we die every day that we live,
But we grow in the process, I trust,
And one lesson we learn—to forgive.

Hush ! for that was his step in the street !
And he soon now will fling back the
door ;
Will he come like a whirlwind in March,
Or just fall like a log to the floor ?
Well, the morning will come round at last,
And the house will be quiet and grey ;
Oh ! I'm thankful to think in my heart
That his mother won't know far away.

A LULLABY.

WITHOUT APOLOGIES TO SIR WALTER SCOTT.

(1) HUSH thee, my baby, thy sire was a slave,
Whom overwork thrust in the dark, early
grave ;
The gloomy, grey streets from this den which we
see,
Are hungrily waiting, dear baby, for thee.
O hush thee, my baby.

O sleep whilst thou may, babe, by night and by
day,
Thy pale mother rests not, but stitches away ;
There's no one to guard thee from hunger
but she,
Her tears flowing silently all for thee.
O hush thee, my baby.

O hush thee, my baby, through days dark and wild
Stream sun-shafts of glory that can't be defiled ;
The marching of myriads is borne to our ears,
And we will march with them, and sing through
our tears.
O hush thee, my baby !

FOR THOSE IN PERIL ON THE SEA.

O BRING them back from wind and wave,
 To wife and mother, babe, and friend,
Where sweet home faces bend above,
 There let our dear ones find their end !
The waves roll up from mighty gulfs,
 But here we kneel and pray to Thee,
Whilst loud winds whistle through the aisles,
 For those in peril on the sea.

The coppery sky lowers closely down ;
 The thunders roll, the lightnings flash ;
Deep shades or lurid glare we see,
 And hear with pain the billows dash.
O bring them home, where land-sounds break,
 To toil once more, our stay to be,
Where we may tend them let them pass,
 And save them from the raging sea !

Back to the flickering, cheerful fire,
 The babe's warm fingers clinging tight ;
The wifely welcome at the door,
 As from their toils they trudge at night.
Sweeter than scents of soil and flowers
 Our loved ones' lives, tho' hard they be,
For love has made their labours light,
 O bring them back from wind and sea !

For whom shall we make fair the board,
Or sweep the room, or light the fire,
If they should sink into the deep,
Submissive to the sea's mad ire ?
Here aged mother, sweetheart, wife,
And children who scarce understand,
Kneel down and ask with tear and sob
And heaving sighs, " Bring them to land."

The sky was fair when out they sailed,
We let them go without the clasp
We might have given them had we thought
That they would meet Death's awful grasp ;
But now the threatening wind and wave
Awake our souls in prayer to Thee.
O God, extend Thy saving grace
To those in peril on the sea.

THREE.

WE two were friends—two women, who just met
And loved, and kissed each other, and were glad,
And walked for years along a common way,
When skies were blue, when rains fell grey and sad,
Until he came, and laughing stood between ;
Then bit by bit her life from mine she drew,

Gently and slowly, so as not to hurt,
And when she went away I scarcely knew.

Love came the first, the old primeval claim,
The call from misty ages, clear and strong,
That will not be denied or hushed to sleep ;
Yet oft the days are wearisome and long.
She does not call or write ; still, love is here,
But, oh ! why did she take her life from mine ?
A voice within me mourns for my lost friend,
Despite love's kisses, warm and rich as wine.

Did she, too love him ? Oh, why were we three,
Or being two why can't I let her go,
And feel the conqueror who has won the game ?
I never guessed that I should hurt her so.
It seems but yesterday we crossed the fields
Wet with the morning dew ; alone were we,
Arm linked in arm—and then a shadow fell
Close to our feet, and sudden we were three.

Shall we be friends again, sometime, somewhere ?
After she sleeps the pain and grief away,
And meets me with the same old happy smile,
The frank, free look she wore but yesterday ?
Will she forget that sometime in the past
A shadow came between, and she was one—
A weary shape between the earth and sky
Who journeyed to a bed of dust—alone ?

Howe'er it be, those years were not in vain ;
Those years when she and I were all in all,
And loved each other so, and cheered, and helped,
Till from the ages came that restless call.
It must be she will come to me again,
When passion dead is mouldering into dust,
And we shall be just two whose meeting eyes
Remember only love, and help, and trust.

A RIDING SONG.

¶H, AWAY, Oh away ! Over hill-tops, and down
Through the still, purple valleys, away from
the town !
Away from the shops, and the policemen, and
lamps,
From the rich folk with swagger, and down-at-heel
tramps.

Oh, away, and away, oh, my gallant, brown mare ;
Both at table and stable a place will be bare !
I could stand them no longer, but stole right away
For a gallop with thee at the close of the day.

There's a dude who will yawn in the drawing-room
soon !
Whilst we ride glad and free 'neath the light of
the moon.

And my father will curse as he chews his mous-tache—

Oh the wild, little breeze shaking yonder red ash !

And my mother will tremble, poor dear, at his frown,

For she ever looks up as my father looks down,
But the man whom I love I'll look straight in the face.

Oh, away, bonnie Bess, was there ere such a race ?

Oh, away and away ! If each woman, like me,
Learnt to ride such a ride, all the world would be free !

And their forms would be straight as the look in their eyes,

And no coward be bred underneath the wide skies.

BEHIND THE MASK.

BEHIND this quiet smiling mask I moan
“ When shall I dare to be myself, O God !
And all my strength and all my weakness own,
And my tired feet with Freedom’s joy be shod ? ”

They never guess, who see me day by day,
The loathing and the longing buried deep ;
They read not the fine smile that oft doth play
Around my mouth—nor guess how much I weep,

Weep inwardly, with tears that leave no trace !
Not strong enough, O God, to break the chain,
Nor weak enough, content within my place
To love the empty peace, the barren pain.
I hate the senseless mirror on the wall,
The chat of ribbons, and the latest news
Of who is dead, and who in love doth fall ;
The price of butter, and the style of shoes !
What is it that I pine for ? I scarce know,
But something bigger, broader than a tomb,
For glorious winds, and piles of waist-high snow,
For risks to run, for life, for gain, for doom !
To be some strong man's comrade—but instead
My husband, like a woman, fears the wind.
Between the being born and being dead
Life is an utter blank—a desert blind.
Within my room a little picture hangs,
Of rugged hills that strive to touch the cloud,
A flaming bush there is of golden broom,
Lit by the moon, who tears her misty shroud ;
And down the narrow path a horseman rides
And sends the pebbles rolling down the track,
And through the fearsome glen a brown stream
glides ;
But craggy hills are towering at his back !
The home is for the woman, so they say ;
The seat within the crowded car they give ;
And for the selfsame work the lesser pay,
And when we err the harder task to live.
Where are your fallen men ? They, shameless, pass

Respected, honoured, welcomed. Women take
Their tainted lives—look up to them, alas !

The foolish woman's heart in vain may break
For one to whisper “Never mind the past !

All that is done and over. Start again !
Love loves through all things. Never heed the
blast

From this chill world—dear heart, I see no
stain !”

What is it that I ask ? A vaster work
Than washing dirty dishes, thankless task !
Than making clean again the daily murk
That covers senseless things, that's what I ask.
For space, for air, for hardships, and a chance
To win the common wreath they toss to men ;
For feet to climb, as well as follow, dance,
And if I fall the hope to rise again.

PARTED.

HE broke the promises he made ;
He said “To honour,”—“ To degrade,”
He should have said to say it true,
There was but fennel left, and rue !

Some women might have loved him still,
And closely clung through days of ill,
Still nursing hopes, each one more faint,—
I was a woman, not a saint !

When nature made this soul of mine
She made clear justice there to shine,
I can but love where I can trust—
I cannot kiss when trailed through dust.

I should have stayed, old women said ;
Waited at night, and shared his bed !
Till children's eyes had searched my face
And read its hate, its scorn, disgrace !

He was a stranger in my sight,
When trust had flown—then flew delight !
I did not scold, nor weep—I went
Unto a life as hard as Lent.

I loved the little house we had ;
The fire, the pictures gay and sad ;
The bright canary's joyous trill—
But loved it not above all ill.

I took a bare and cheerless room
That scarce was wider than a tomb,
And got up early, came home late,
As lone as bird without a mate.

But this was better than to stay
His bread to bite from day to day ;
My shoulders, not my soul bowed down—
They said that it was strange in town !

And other men as I went by
Smiled meaningly into my eye,
And one smiled not, but pleaded well,
But still I walked alone through hell.

Is there no choice, no choice but this :
The libertine's, the drunkard's kiss
Or loneliness without an end ;
The shoulders or the soul to bend ?

And are they weak, or strong, who bear
The degradation—festering care,
Without a sigh till they grow old ?
No ; they are weak—'tis I am bold.

Homeless and friendless I went forth
Whilst cruel glances searched my worth,
But they—they fear the dark unknown
Which I have travelled all alone.

I made it better for some wife ;
Patience becomes a poisoned knife
That cuts the throat of Progress grand,
And lets its rich blood rot the land.

I was at least a pioneer,
Against the jest, the laugh, the sneer,
I walked unflinching—I have shown
A woman weak can stand alone.

THE TONGUE.

GOD made the woman's arm soft, warm and white,

And pencilled it with veins of harebell blue,
That it might cling to man with sweet delight,
And clinging lead him better than he knew.

Then, looking on His work, God quickly thought
That man's more powerful limb would foster
wrong ;
So on a crimson thread the force He wrought
By which the woman wields her dreaded tongue.

BETRAYED.

BEWARE, ye flowers that open to the sun,
He'll look into your hearts with flaming eye,
And tell the whispering winds what he has done,
And they will laugh and tell it to the sky
Till God Himself shall hear, and, frowning,
chide.

Only to think, a summer's space ago
I did not fear the world so strong and wide,
Yet now a little hamlet bends me low,
And sinks my proud head to the very dust,
And it was love that brought me unto this,

A kiss too many, and the virtue trust,
A pleading voice that begged and promised
bliss.

Shut tight, ye little buds upon the tree,
And do not heed the voice of sun and wind,
Or they will serve you as my love served me—
Will slay you with a whisper, low and kind.
Christ loved too much, and so they drained His
blood !

O, let the rain like cataracts from the sky
Pour down and wash away that little wood,
That in its soft, green grass no more may lie
Another lover with his magic tongue
Which makes the truth a lie, a lie the truth,
Who shares with one the sunshine and the song,
But leaves her in the days of storm and ruth !
And strew within my grave no blushing flowers,
Confessing kisses given by the sun,
Or I shall wake and weep through endless hours—
And lay me where no maiden's feet may run,
Lest I should murmur from my bed of dust
A tale, to rob her heart of love and trust.

THE MOTHER.

3 BUY greatest joy with my tears,
And I wear in my bosom a flower
To be withered, or spared to the years ;
And I learn for the first time my power !

For I stand face to face with old Death
And I beat him away with my prayers,
And he spareth my little flower's breath
At the brunt of my fiery despairs.

I sit in my small silent room
Whilst the roses are blowing outside,
And my heart is a garden of bloom,
For my one little flower has not died !
And the heather is blue on the moors,
And the days are all golden and long,
Whilst I sit calm and happy indoors,
With my heart full of motherhood-song.

I toil through the day, strong with love,
And the night is sweet-parted in two
By a cry like a bird's in the grove
As a pale morning comes, faint with dew.
And I ask not the gown rustling loud,
Nor the ease, nor the gayness, nor rest,
For I wear robes of motherhood proud
Through the bird and the flower at my
breast.

THE VALLEY OF DREAMS.

HAVE you walked in the Valley of Dreamland,
Where the shadows hang scented and deep,
Have you gathered its red and white roses,
Laid your head on its mosses to sleep ?

Once I roamed through its velvety hollows,
But there came a fierce angel named Pain,
And she drove me with sword from the garden
Where I never may wander again.

Have you walked in the Valley of Dreamland,
With its soft sky of languishing blue ?
O, you dream in that wonderful valley
That each heart in the wide world beats true.
Then you wake with a start from your slumber,
With the angel stern-eyed leaning o'er ;
With the valley of dreams left behind you,
And reality stretching before.

Have you walked in the Valley of Dreamland ?
Then whatever may come you are glad ;
For the fragrance that hung round the roses
Faintly floats when the journey grows sad.
When the hot sun burns fiercely upon you,
You can catch the cool chime of its streams,
And your hot cheek remembers sweet mosses
In the beautiful valley of dreams.

IF.

WHAT would I do if I were a man,
With a lordly breadth of mental span,
And the heart of a man in me ?

Oh, listen well, and I'll answer well,
Or as well as the tongue of a woman may tell !
First, I'd sail in a ship on the sea.

I'd call my ship by a maiden's name
As wild as a gull, pure, bright as flame,
And put forth on the wide, salt sea !
And the mast might bend and billows roar,
I would plough every ocean and touch every shore
Ere I turned my face homewards again.

I'd smoke a pipe with a big, black bowl,
And fear to lose it as 'twere my soul,
Because of the one who gave it !
If one night it fell in roaring sea,
With the heart of a man fixed so firm within me,
Should I not bravely plunge in to save it ?

But, no, I'd not be that kind of man !
I'd boast me a breadth of mental span,
And curse me, and buy another :
I would tell my love the pipe sucked well,
O, better than tongue of an angel could tell,
And remorse in the next puff smother.

I'd watch the Trinidad cocoa-dance !
I'd chat with Brittany girls of France,
My old black substitute burning ;

My soul, clean, true to her who gave
The lost pipe that somewhere bobbed up on the
wave,
As the needle to pole-star turning.

But if I found, when I came at last,
With presents and sea-yarns of white squalls
past,
She'd married a low land-blubber,
I'd just smoke my pipe of old black bowl,
Which replaced the one lost though 'twas loved
like my soul ;
Laugh, or curse, maybe, but no blubber !

But I'm just a girl in the window-seat,
Who sits and looks on the still, grey street,
Whilst turning heel of a stocking !
With my soul away on the flashing spray,
That is golden by night, that is silver by day,
Where the jolly, brave ships are rocking.

If ever a boy be born of me,
I'll sing him songs of hills and the sea,
And he shall go far a-roaming ;
Though I sit and sigh in window-seat
To catch, o'er the stones of the little grey street,
The sound of his steps slow-coming.

THE CHILDLESS HOUSE.

PATHETICALLY neat and clean, it seems to
wait a guest !
There is no movement on the hearth, no laughter
on the stair,
No stir of life that makes more sweet the eventide
of rest,
No wee hand dims the windowpane—the hearth
is always fair.
What mean the sphinxes black that crouch each
side the hearth all day ?
At night they look like demons in the fire-light's
changing glow ;
Like demons who are whispering one long,
sardonic " Nay,"
As crouch they ready as to spring besides our
hearth of snow.
Now solemn marks the dark, old clock the
moments, minutes, years,
And seems a big, black coffin-shape, with voice
of awful doom.
The kettle joins the chorus like a voice that sings
through tears,
Whilst like a glittering snake the light darts
o'er the still neat room.
O mystery of the gleaming fire that dies and has
new birth,

Once buried deep beneath the earth—a grand,
primeval wood,
What mean the sphinxes black that haunt the
desert of this hearth ?
They look so evil to behold 'tis hard to think
they're good.
Thou fire that once was buried dark, and once was
flashing green,
Breaking with Springtime into bloom, with nests
amongst thy leaves,
With lovers walking 'neath thy boughs of thick
and glossy sheen,
What means the mournful, ancient clock, with
voice that endless grieves ?
Our love sprang up like flame from dark of ages
gone before,
It had not grown in one brief life to be so fair
a thing,
It must have passed a hundred times from
death to life's bright door !
We bought the house to front the sun and a
sweet bird to sing.
And bright indeed my needles shone within the
velvet case !
O magic, ancient needle, thou hast worked the
sails of ships,
As man went sailing, sailing from the well-loved
woman face,
Whilst she stayed in her chamber with the sigh
upon her lips.

I told my shining needles they should do more
glorious things,

I promised I would thread them with bright
blue, and gold and red,

For flow'rs on finest garments, whiter than an
angel's wings,

The fairest, sweetest garments that on grass were
ever spread !

The frowning portraits on the wall look on me
with disdain,

As once bright needles crumble with the rust
within their case ;

I fear them in the gloaming or when skies are
dark with rain,

There's such a scowl of hate and scorn on every
pictured face.

O fire that hid for ages long within the dark, old
earth,

Thou soul of ancient forest trees that fell so long
ago,

What mean the sphinxes black that crouch on each
side of our hearth ?

And what is that they mutter as thy light is
dying low ?

I shut my heart against the child whose laughter
thrills the street,

I shut my gate, and go within, my heart grown
like a stone,

But over it both night and day there echo
childish feet ;
Our house is dark though looking south, and
love grows tired and lone.

LITTLE THINGS.

SHE was just a little singer,
One whose name scarce further went
Than upon the air might linger
The wood-vi'let's sweet, shy scent.

Not a critic carped or flattered,
Told her weakness or her might,
For her dreams were never scattered
Further than her hearth-stone white.

All their elfin, witching glory
Poured forth by the firelight red,
As the children begged a story
Ere they climbed the stairs to bed.

There are golden throats and glorious
Flinging many a magic strain
To the raptured world, victorious
O'er the seas of chance and pain.

But some bless the little singers
With their humble coats of brown,
Chirping when the first beam lingers,
Waking up the tired, grey town.

There are mighty, towering mountains,
With proud crest of Alpine snow ;
There are wondrous, irised fountains,
Bowered where thund'ring cataracts go,

That are loved, but not more truly
Then some tiny, nameless hill :
Heaven for some may bend more bluely
O'er a tinkling, flower-veiled rill.

For the gods of peak and valley
Fashioning a flower-cup sweet,
Thought of strength that could not rally,
And made ways for little feet.

THE MANIAC.

YES, they say I am mad, but I know
That my mind is as clear as the dew,
When it hangs on the bonnie, sweet briar
With the sun, moon and stars shining through.
And I love the good sun—he is warm !
And the bright stars will do me no harm ;

But my heart sings a gay little tune
As I view through the window the moon.

Once the moon made me sad. Ah, but now,
As she rises my spirit is gay.

Once I wept, and the people seemed strange,
For they watched me, and whispered all day.
I will love the white moon to the end ;
In that sad time she was my one friend,
For we used to walk by the sad sea,
And she sang sweet, sad stories to me.

Once I had a braw lover, so strong !
And as brown as a fall leaf was he,
As he sailed in a ship with red sail,
And they said he was drowned in the sea !
But the moon and I know, oh, we know,
For we went out when mad winds sunk low,
And the billows were murmuring a rune ;
In a pool he slept, bright with the moon.

In a tide-pool he slept, of pale green ;
And his face was not brown, yet 'twas he !
And a white star beside him had stayed ;
He looked strange, but could not deceive me.
For the moon and I knew, wondrous wise,
That he slept, calm and safe, 'neath the skies ;
So I oft stole away to the sea,
And I talked to the moon—she to me.

I was sad when the bright moon went home,
Leaving me with those people so wild ;
They who chid me for laughter or tears,
Just as if I was only a child !

O, I laughed when she came back once more,
And we went for a walk by the shore,
Till we came to the pool. He was gone !
In the world I had no friend but one !

And my heart burnt within me like coal,
They had wakened him up as he slept,
In the pool with its bonnie, white star !
And my heart grew not cool though I wept.
Yes, they say I am mad, but I know
I'm but sad when the tide has gone low,
When the billows like tired babies cry—
Oh, how weary they murmur and sigh !

Who, ah, who, could have wakened my love ?
And have stolen the star as he dreamed ?
Who but people who said he was drowned ?
Cried the wiseacre moon as she beamed.
And I knew one was he, his false friend,
Who would help me the torn nets to mend,
Though I told him I hated him deep,
Deeper far than a drowned man can sleep.

For he stole a sweet kiss that was his
Who sailed forth in the ship with red sail ;

And the man who will kiss angry lips
Would awaken a sleeper so pale.
So I grasped close a knife my love gave,
And I silently walked by the wave,
And I waited until the thief came,
Then the knife bit his heart like a flame !

And I knelt down and hearkened him moan,
And he said, " God has great justice done,
For 'twas I sank the ship that he sailed
In the deep, from the beautiful sun.
Christ, forgive me ! But Christ never knew
How the love in a human heart grew,
Nor how bitter a draught man must taste—
His beloved by another embraced ! "

Then I said " I will hate you in hell !
In your agony laugh at my own !
For you stole the white star from his pool ;
Whilst he slept, full of trust, all alone !
Tell me, where is the kiss and the star ?
Oh, I know they are hid, near or far ! "
Then he moaned, " Oh, my sin ! She is mad ! "
And the moon and I laughed, precious glad.

Then his face grew as pale as the surf ;
There was only the billow's low sigh ;
And behold in the pool of my love
Fell the silver star down from the sky.

But the lost kiss he never gave back,
For in death was his soul stormy black—
But his groans rose no more by the sea,
And the moon and I laughed merrily !

Once I had a braw lover, so strong,
And as brown as a fall leaf was he,
As he sailed in his ship with red sail—
And they said he was drowned in the sea !
But the moon and I know, oh, we know,
For we went out when mad winds sunk low,
And the billows were murmuring a rune ;
In a pool he slept, bright with the moon.

But I never could find him again,
Though I searched every pool—after this—
And I knew he had wandered away
Vexed with me for his false friend's base kiss.
And I sighed " Oh, forgive me, my friend,
As I sat down the torn nets to mend,
Looking out for your ship from the south,
Came your rival and wild-kissed my mouth.

" But you need not to think him I loved,
For, my friend, if you look on the shore,
He is killed with the knife that you gave—
He will kiss me, sweet friend, never more !
O come back and lie down in the pool,
There's not one that's so pretty and cool ;
And all day whilst the sad billows break
I will sit there and sing till you wake."

And I might him have found (I don't know),
But they came and close fastened my hands ;
"She is mad," was the tale that went round,
And the waves echoed "mad" from their
strands.

There was only the moon faithful then
As I passed from the dwellings of men ;
For they all were afraid of me soon !
And my prison knew but the pale moon.

Farewell, ships by the side of the sea !
Drown not men who are trusting to you !
Oh, I once watched a ship sail away
Through the dusk of a summer night's blue ;
And my kerchief I waved till from sight
Went the ship with my whole life's delight,
And I thought " He will soon come again ;
Oh, God guard him through wind and through
rain."

I am now far away from the sea—
There's the shadow of trees on the floor,
And the wind in the branches at night
Seems the sea, with its pitiless roar.
Then I shriek " Drown the wild men who
sail !
For why do they go out in the gale ?
Splinter ships, Sea, and bury them deep,
And thus teach every woman to weep."

Then they take me away from the wind ;
Where the moon cannot talk through the pane ;
In a little dark room that is hot—
With their cruel hands on me again.
And I cry " Oh, my lover was kind,
Though his strength was the strength of the wind—
If you hurt me he'll know of it, soon
In his pool that is lit by the moon."

But I smother and sigh in that room,
With its one window far from the floor,
Where my lover could never look in,
(As he might) if he came from the shore.
And I beat with fierce hands the soft walls,
And I hear a wild voice that mad calls,
Till I find it is mine and I swoon,
And am woke up again by the moon.

As I sit on the floor in the sun
And I hold to my ear a sweet shell,
I can hear the sea boil round the boats,
And by rocks that are blacker than hell.
Thus I sit with my shell, and I dream
Of the wild petrel's joy-maddened scream
O'er the beach of a salt-scented town,
Till the sun red as blood has gone down.

And I once felt so happy and good,
And my brow grew so tranquil and cool,

Just as long, long ago, when a child
As I laved my hot hands in a pool.
So they took me outside to the wind,
And it kissed all my face, oh, so kind !
And I felt calm, and longing for sleep ;
Far too happy to laugh or to weep.

But one day came a woman quite strange,
As her garments were black, just as white
Was her face—and she looked at me long,
And she made my good soul sick with fright.
For she looked like the face by the star,
Only wearier, sadder by far.

“Don’t you know me? Remember my lad?”—
And I said “They will think you are mad.

“ They will think you are mad if you cry ;
If you laugh with a joy that is deep ;
And the people who talk to the moon
Are all mad, and they love these to keep
Far away from the ones who are calm,
And whose words are not wild, but like balm,
But the folk who live here oft are gay—
Gayer far than those not shut away.

“ It is only sometimes in the night
Awful forms come and taunt by your bed,
And they strike lurid lights on their thumbs,
Whilst their looks are more wan than the
dead.

In their hands without flesh are red knives
That have cut throats of babes and of
wives,
And you'd best be in dullest of holes
Than have visits from murderers' souls."

Then she turned and fled, and I felt glad
That she went ere the grim man came back,
He who thinks you are only a dog—
But I oft wondered why she wore black.
I hate black rocks, and trees, and black
clothes ;
I like white moons and stars—the white rose,
I would love a white house by the sea,
And I dream there is one built for me.

But I know what I'll do, yes, some-day,
I will leap, when there's no one to see,
From the window and leave this hard house,
Where they watch you and watch—I'll be
free !
And the moon will lead me by the road
Till my heart and my brain lose their load,
And I come to my dear lover's pool
To find rest in its waters so cool.
O thou Moon !

A SINGER.

I AM no beauty ;
O beauty's a flower
That men's lips praise for a passing hour ;
The closer they press it
The sooner it dies,
Then they toss it away
With light laughter—or sighs—
But what matter these to the flower that low lies ?

I sing my songs,
I sing, O I sing,
Of Life and Death, of Love and of Spring !
All my beauty and power
In little, round throat,
As I rule vast crowds
With one rich, golden note—
With miserly longing upon it they gloat.

O what is a queen ?
Let History tell
How her fame is bought by Misery's Hell.
The brighter it gloweth
'Tis fed by most fears
Sprung deep from the heart ;
And the hot, thirsty years
Drink it like fierce suns—as if dew, and not tears.

But a singer's power
Resembles a bird's,

For were I to sing without sweet words,
The strong man would tremble
With bitterest grief,
His mighty heart stirred
Like a light aspen leaf—

Then quiver again with a joyful relief.

I had a lover,
Was it yesterday ?

I only know I sent him away,
For I felt the glory
So keen and so strong,
Of the lark in the sky,
So it could not be wrong,

And I hope I may die ere I lose my song.

I love the cities
All gray with soft mist,
The weary faces tired and unkissed,
The glittering lamp-lights
Like big yellow stars,
The ride through the dusk—
And the orchestra's bars—

What joy strikes my soul with those preluding
bars !

I love the perfume
Of flowers on my breast—

The faint, dainty jasmine I love best.

I love worn hands clapping,
But come with a start
From my throne in the sky—
But my song in their heart,
Shall remain and help heal the fever and
smart.

And when I am old,
And weary and pale,
And my voice is a ghost so weak and frail,
I shall give them rapture,
O, yes, even then,
It still shall ring sweet
Through the great hearts of men,
Like the far, haunting echoes of evening glen !

For those who listened
In life's brightest glow,
Will weep for beautiful things that go,
For youth, with its yearnings,
And magical gleams,
That glisten no more
Over Life's slower streams—
But have gone, like my voice, to places of
dreams.

But those who never
Have heard it before
Shall muse what it was in days of yore,

And nigh hush their heart-beats
To catch every note,
Like a swan's song sweet,
From the thin, wrinkled throat—
The last note is God's—into silence to float !

THE HIGHLAND PIPER IN LONDON.

FLY, Piper, to the hills again !
Pipe not that weird majestic strain
'Midst city streets—poor hearts to shake
With longing dreams of fall and lake
In haunted glens where Silence sleeps,
For dark moors where the wild hare leaps ;
Thy pipes unto the hills belong.
Degrade not so thy noble song.

Those pipes in freedom's fight have skirled,
Oh, sell them not unto the world ;
Those same wild pipes that rogue, Rob Roy,
In firelit cave would greet with joy !
Let misty mountains, rock and scar,
Reverberate from near and far,
And red, red rowans sway and sigh
To hear the echoes melt and die.

Ah sordid, sad it seems to me
When mountains sell their melody ;

That pipes which peeled through Hieland glen
Unto the tramp of rebel men
Should sound their songs for careless ear,
To rouse the smile, the stare and sneer—
Or—in the heart of Nature's child
Breed hopeless longings, fierce and wild.

A LAMENT.

I SAW a woman lying in her grave,
Her yellow hair all dabbled in her blood,
Her little hands clenched close in agony,
Her lovely eyes in horror looking up
Through clay and water and the roots of
weeds,
Her little mouth agasp to call for aid.
And as I looked upon her, dumb and blind
To all things else, she moaned, and moaning
cried
“ I went to meet my lover in the wood,
The little laughing wood of beechen green
Through which the convent-bell rung evening in,
And as I went I hummed a little song
That he had taught me on the wide sea-shore,
And danced a measure from the carnival,
And all the world seemed gay with life and
love.
Ah, me ! And I had thought he loved me well !

I went to meet my lover in the wood,
And found a man who had his looks and voice,
Who gripped me till my very heart was crushed,
Who would not hear my voice, but took his
will,

His cruel tiger's will—and then, afraid,
Looked shuddering round upon the evening
wood,

And murdered me. And yet I could not speak,
And could not say to him 'I love you well,
Though you dishonoured, and are murdering
me !

Though you have never loved me, yet I love,
And pity you who feared me and did slay,
Who loved yourself, and hated when 'twas
done.

O love is kind and lets itself go by,
But passion slays us in the name of love,
And hides in shuddering even from itself ;
But if your hands had only loosed awhile
I could have said, "I love you, though you
kill ! "

I see them, see them, from my little grave
Hunting you down from town to city street,
In country wastes and o'er the barren heaths,
Where gipsy fires burn blackness yet more
bare,

And I can nothing do to hide your tracks
For you have lain me helpless in my grave.
How cold a bed is this upon the clay

And dark without a candle's single gleam !
And here I lie, because you were afraid,
A coward following up a tyrant's rage.
Alas, dear love, that this should come from
you,
And not from any wandering vagrant man,
Because I know, laid in the silence here,
That you have never loved me as you said,
For love would slay itself, not what it loved.
Gives honour, life, not death and shame. Ah me !
I went to meet my lover in the wood,
And found he did not love me—but himself."

THE WOMAN IN THE DARK.

I HEARD a woman singing in the dark,
So sad and wild I could not choose but hark,
And in between her lines the restless sea
Sobbed weary anguish, roaming restlessly.

" O bitter, bitter when we crown a king,
And raise aloft a god with fine, strong wing,
And lowly place our heads beneath his foot,
And give him of our heart ; yea, all its root,
And stand him in the naked light of day,
And midst the night's pure stars, a rod to sway
In one strong hand—the other clasps our world,
A jewelled pennon round about him furled,

Made of the tears of all our woman's pride,
Of all the thoughts of self we tossed aside.
O bitter, bitter when the gold turns black,
And all the stars of night mock at his back."

I heard a woman singing as I passed,
Far out at sea down dropped a splintered mast
And guns were booming, bellowing grief and pain,
And all the ragged coast was wrapped in rain.

" O bitter, bitter when our god falls down,
And our own hands must rob him of his crown,
And strip the gilded majesty away
To mocking laughter and the light of day,
And feel the broken rod run sharp as steel
Swift through the bleeding heart that still can feel,
And see the globe he clutched drop into dust,
And all the tears we gave turn into rust,
Yea, blood-red drops of rust no longer fair,
The pennon dropping down to leave him bare.
O bitter, bitter when we call his name,
And try our best to worship just the same."

Soft as the sobbing in the sombre pines
Majestic broodings muttered through her lines,
And through the darkness came a bird of white
And killed itself against the lighthouse light.

" O bitter, bitter when he does not know
That in the dust his head is lying low,

And still in voice imperial doth demand
The worship of the eye, the heart, the hand ;
When none know that our god has tumbled down,
But only we behold him without crown,
When all acclaim and only we accuse
And wail in the hushed dark our god to lose,
Yet when the crowd go by who cannot see,
Must shout our praise, and shout it joyfully.
O bitter, bitter when our upward look
Leaves all our soul a sullen, joyless brook
That never can find rest from pain and dree
Until it knows the clean, refreshing sea."

Far out at sea a weary ship aground
Crashed to its last long fall with thundering sound,
The waves closed o'er it chafing restlessly,
And hid it in the depths where no storms be.

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